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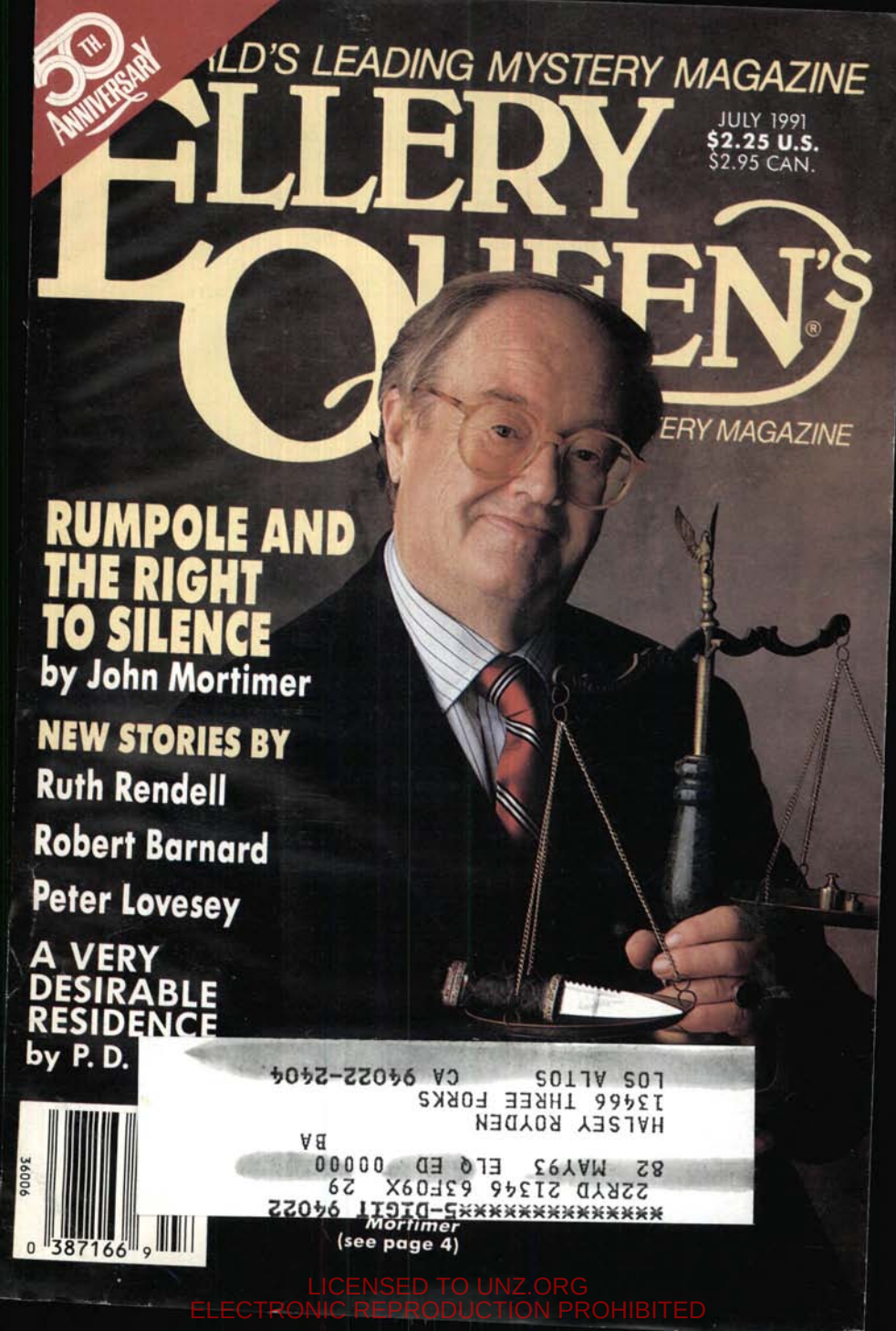

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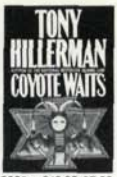

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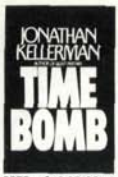

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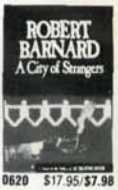

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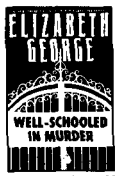

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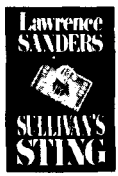

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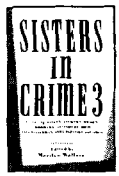

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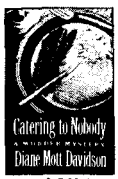

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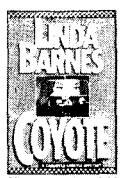

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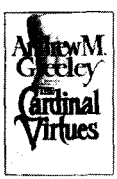

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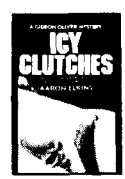

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"We're going to have nothing but computer courses and business studies. Our masters don't want literature," the professor told the party.

"Or jury trials. Or freelance barristers. Or the right to silence." Rumpole joined in the litany and earned a rebuke from Hilda. "Ssh, Rumpole. You're not down the Old Bailey now."

One of six stories from Rumpole a la Carte, *the first hardcover Rumpole collection (published by Viking)—earlier collections were published by Penguin in paperback only. "The six stories," said* Publishers Weekly, *"abound with wit, familiar eccentrics, and those moments of eloquence that make justice seem as simple and desirable as common sense."*

This July issue in our 50th Anniversary year is dedicated to our countless British contributors, who from the very first issue have played a dynamic role in EQMM's history. Space does not permit a listing of the authors who have been so invaluable in our sustenance through the years, but you and they know who they are—at least we hope so.

John Mortimer (on this issue's cover) is, of course, one of the most prized of our current contributors from the U.K.—his fiction hilarious and poignant and close to the bone. He has managed to write the series about Rumpole while also writing a number of novels and books of non-fiction and dozens of plays, including his television adaptations of I, Claudius *and* Brideshead Revisited. *He has been a barrister since 1948. The Rumpole stories were first devised as one-hour television plays and later adapted, for our lasting gratification, for the reading public . . .*

"Q"

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RUMPOLE AND THE RIGHT TO SILENCE

by JOHN MORTIMER

What distresses me most about our times is the cheerful manner in which we seem prepared to chuck away those blessed freedoms we have fought for, bled for, and got banged up in chokey for down the centuries. We went to all that trouble with King John to get trial by our peers, and now a lot of lawyers with the minds of business consultants want to abolish juries. We struggled to get the presumption of innocence, that golden thread that runs through British justice, and no one seems to give a toss for it any more. What must we do, I wonder? Go back to Runnymede every so often to get another Magna Carta and cut off King Charles's head at regular intervals, to ensure our constitutional rights? Speaking entirely for myself, and at my time of life, I really don't feel like going through all that again.

The hard-won privilege most under attack at the moment is a suspect's right to silence. Those upon whom the Old Bill looks with disfavor are, it is suggested, duty-bound to entertain the nick with a flood of reminiscence, which will make the job of convicting them of serious crimes a pushover. Now if I were to be arrested—a thought which lurks constantly in the back of my mind—and found myself, an innocent Old Bailey hack, confronted by Detective Chief Inspector Brush and his merry men, I should say nothing, saving my eloquence for a jury of common-sense citizens. And those accused of malpractices may have other reasons for silence apart from a natural shyness in the presence of the law. On the other hand, of course, they may be guilty as charged. These were the questions which confronted me during the Gunster murder case, when a pall of silence hung not only over my client but over some of those dearest, or at least nearest, to me.

Gunster University stands in a somewhat grim Northern landscape, far from the dreaming spires of Oxford or the leafy Cambridge

From Rumpole a la Carte *by John Mortimer. Copyright © Advanpress Ltd., 1990. Excerpted by arrangement with Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA, Inc.*

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backs. It seems to have been built in the worst age of concrete brutalism and looked, as Hilda and I approached it in a taxi from the station, like an industrial estate or an exceptionally uninviting airport. We had gone there to see young Audrey Wystan graduate in English. Readers of these reminiscences will know that when it comes to breeding, the Wystans are up there with the rabbits, and She Who Must Be Obeyed has relatives scattered all over the world. Were I to be shipwrecked and cast upon some Pacific island, I should not be in the least surprised to find that the fellow in charge of banana production was one of her long-lost cousins. "Audrey is Dickie's daughter," She had told me, and, when I looked blank, had explained, "Dickie was Daddy's brother Maurice's oldest. Her mother was inclined to be flighty, but Audrey was always a clever girl. She has Daddy's blood, you see. And now she's got first-class honors in English. You never got first-class honors in anything, did you, Rumpole?" From all this you will gather that Hilda has a strong sense of family loyalty, and when she heard of young Audrey's success she felt she had to be in at the prizegiving, and, as crime appeared to be a little thin on the ground at that time of the year, I was brought along to swell the applause.

So far as entertainment value went, the degree ceremony at Gunster University ranked a little below a Boy Scout jamboree in the Albert Hall and a notch or two above a Methodist service in a civic center. Its main fault was a certain monotony. When you have watched one young person doff a mortarboard, shake hands, and accept a scroll you have seen them all, and you still have about a thousand more to get through. When it was the turn of the English students to file across the platform, their names were called by Professor Clive Clympton—tall, more powerfully built than your usual academic, with gingery hair, an aggressive beard, and a resonant voice. When called, the students presented themselves in front of the Chancellor, Sir Dennis Twineham, chairman of the Twineham Tasty Foods chain, and the University's main source of finance in these days of decreasing government support. Sir Dennis was a small, plump, round-shouldered man with drooping eyes and a turned-downed mouth, who looked like a frog in some children's storybook who'd got dressed up in a mortarboard and a black-and-gold-embroidered velvet gown. Standing next to him, and dressed in similar academic robes, was Hayden Charles, Vice-Chancellor. Charles, apparently a distinguished economist, was slight, grey-haired, and good-looking in a dapper sort of way. His smile seemed

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somewhat patronizing, as though the idea that these honors would help their recipients land a decent job in a merchant bank was really rather quaint.

When the ceremony was over, young Audrey told us we were invited to the Vice-Chancellor's house, a handsome Georgian mansion which stood on the edge of the campus like a good deed in a concrete world. Tea and sandwiches were being served in the big marble-paved entrance hall, from which a staircase with a wooden balustrade curled up to the higher floors and a painted dome. Nibbling and sipping academics and their families packed out the place, and the party was being ably supervised by a grey-haired, competent-looking woman I later discovered to be Mrs. O'Leary, the Vice-Chancellor's housekeeper.

"They're destroying the universities! The Government's condemning us to death by a thousand cuts." Clive Clympton, the English professor, was haranguing our group, which consisted of my good self, Hilda, Audrey, and a vaguely anxious-looking person with a purple gown continually slipping off his shoulders. He had introduced himself as Martin Wayfield, Head of Classics.

"You should see what they're doing to the law, Professor," I said to Clympton, adding my pennyworth of gloom to the party.

"We're going to have nothing but computer courses and business studies. Our masters don't want literature," the professor told us.

"Or jury trials. Or freelance barristers. Or the right to silence." I joined in the litany and earned a rebuke from Hilda. "Ssh, Rumpole. You're not down the Old Bailey now."

"The right to what?" The professor seemed puzzled, so I explained. "Silence. If you're accused, you can keep quiet and make the Prosecution prove its case. That's what they want to abolish. Bang goes freedom! Nowadays the law's supposed to work with business efficiency, like a bank!"

"Most of the people reading English are going into banks." Audrey, who seemed a bright and reasonably attractive young lady despite her Wystan ancestry, joined in. And Professor Clympton's mouth curved in a mirthless sort of way over his beard as he said, "What can you expect, Audrey, with a Vice-Chancellor like Hayden Charles who writes books about money?" He was looking across the hall to Charles, who was talking to Sir Dennis Twineham. Beside him was a well-turned-out, well-groomed female, who looked as though she might have featured on the cover of *Vogue* ten or fifteen years before.

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Audrey had told us that this was Mercy Charles, the Vice-Chancellor's wife.

"You know Sir Dennis, our Chancellor, is head of that great cultural institution, Twineham's Tasty Foods? And poor old Hayden has to spend most of his time licking the Chancellor's boots." As Clympton said this, the housekeeper had drawn up beside him and was offering him a plate of what, I deduced from pursed lips, she might have hoped were cyanide sandwiches.

"But Professor Clympton"—Hilda was fair-minded as always—"they do quite good frozen curries at Twineham's in the Gloucester Road."

"Don't remind me!" I shuddered at the memory of an occasional evening when Hilda hadn't felt like cooking, and the gangling Martin Wayfield came into the conversation with a fluting protest, "Perhaps they do, Mrs. Rumpole. But they don't do Latin. Nothing's been said yet, but I may be the last Professor of Classics the University of Gunster will have."

"*Amo, amas, amat.* Wordsworth. The right to silence." I joined in the lament. "The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!"

" *'Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,'* " Wayfield quoted.

" *'Onus probandi', 'in flagrante delictu,'* " I told him.

"What did you say?" The classical scholar seemed puzzled by my Classics.

"Sorry. That's about all the Latin I know," I explained. "But I do know Wordsworth." And I recited, in what I thought was a very moving manner, some lines from the old sheep of the Lake District:

"Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth:
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth."

Far from being touched by this, Clympton looked at me as though I had made a joke in poorish taste. "Wordsworth," he barked with disapproval, "ended up a Tory!"

"Perhaps," I told him, "but he can still bring tears to the old eyes."

"The purpose of literature"—Clympton seemed to be conducting a seminar—"is not to produce tears, but social change. Your precious Wordsworth betrayed the French Revolution." Then he stopped lecturing me and sought other company. Mercy Charles was now standing alone, a still beautiful woman with long, soft hair and a smart dark-blue suit with golden buttons. The English professor excused himself and went over to her, and Audrey said, "Clive Clympton's

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a wonderful teacher. What do you think of him, Uncle Horace?" At which point I claimed the right to silence.

Later we were introduced to Hayden Charles, who spoke highly of Audrey's attainments and talked about the fellowship she was being offered. Hilda pointed out that she came from the sort of family to which brains had been handed out with the greatest generosity. I was also introduced to the head of Twineham's Tasty Foods, who held out his hand to me in a somewhat curious manner, with the first two fingers extended and the others tucked into his palm. I paid little attention to this at the time as I was watching Professor Clympton, all aggression drained away, talking to Mrs. Charles in a gentle voice and with smiling eyes.

"Mercy Charles is pretty, don't you think?" Audrey said as we were leaving. "Did you know she used to be quite a famous model?" Hilda frowned at me when I asked if that meant she was a model wife, or merely a model model.

Such were the characters in the drama which was played out on an evening, shortly after the graduation ceremony, in the Vice-Chancellor's home. After dinner, Mrs. O'Leary was in the kitchen, engaged in polishing some of Charles's silver, the care of which was her particular pride. The kitchen door was a little open and it gave onto the paved entrance hall, which had been the scene of our tea party, so she was able to hear the sound of upraised male voices from the doorway of the Vice-Chancellor's study on the first floor.

She distinguished the words "licking the Chancellor's boots" and she was afterwards able to swear that they were shouted in Professor Clympton's voice. Then she heard Charles shout, "You've gone mad! Totally mad!" and footsteps on the staircase, followed by the words she couldn't altogether make out in Clympton's voice. However, she was sure she heard an "oh!" and then "temporary" and finally "more is!" This was followed by further incomprehensible shouting, a noise like wood breaking, and a crash. There were then footsteps running across the marble and the sound of the front door opening and banging shut.

When she got out into the hall, she first noticed that part of the wooden banister of the staircase was broken. And then beneath it she saw the slight, elegant figure of Hayden Charles lying on the blood-stained floor. She knelt beside him, held his wrist, and called his name, but he was past hearing her.

The next day, after the police had been called and made their

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preliminary inquiries, Detective Inspector Wallace and Detective Sergeant Rose, both of the local force, called on Professor Clive Clympton and asked him to account for his movements at around ten o'clock the previous evening. The professor, who must have remembered what I had told him about the right to silence, said he had no intention of answering their questions. From then on, in all matters of importance concerning the Gunster case, he shut up like an oyster.

It wasn't only among those accused of crime that silence appeared to be golden. Shortly after the news of Hayden Charles's death had appeared in the papers, I was in my room in Chambers, preparing for an extremely tedious Post Office fraud due in the next day, when Soapy Sam Ballard, Q.C., the sanctimonious leader of our group of legal hacks in Equity Court, put his head round my door and said, "You're working late."

"Oh, no," I told him. "I'm just arranging my large collection of foreign postage stamps." "Are you, really?" "No, of course not!" The fellow does ask the most idiotic questions. Undeterred by the coolness of my welcome, he made his way into the room, carrying, I couldn't help noticing, a moderate-sized zipper-bag covered in some tartan and no doubt plastic material.

"I just called in to put this away in my room," Ballard said, as though it explained everything.

"This what?"

"This bag."

"Oh, that."

Ballard clearly had more in mind than introducing me to his bag, for he sat in my client's chair and prepared to unburden himself.

"I wanted to talk to you sometime. I mean, Rumpole, how do you find marriage?"

"In my experience, you usually don't. It finds you. It comes creeping up unexpectedly and grabs you by the collar. How's Matey?" I was referring, of course, to Mrs. Ballard for whom Soapy Sam had fallen whilst she was the Old Bailey matron, administering first aid to both sides of the law. "You mean my wife, I assume?" Ballard guessed right. "You remember the wonderful work she did at the Central Criminal Court?"

"She was a dab hand with the Elastoplast from what I can remember," I assured him.

"Much loved, wasn't she, by all you fellows?"

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"Well, let's say, highly respected."

"Highly respected! Yes!"

When we had reached this accord, Ballard seemed stumped for words. He straightened his tie, crossed and recrossed his legs, pulled at his fingers until he seemed in danger of wrenching them off, and finally came out with, "Rumpole, what's your opinion of secrets? In married life?"

"Absolutely essential." I had no doubt about it.

"Is one entitled to keep things from one's spouse, for instance?" He asked the question after a good deal of finger pulling and, out of consideration for his joints, I was able to reassure him, "As many things as possible. Everything you tell the other side just gives them material for cross-examination. That's the first lesson in advocacy, Bollard."

"I wanted your opinion because of the slight, well, difference that has arisen between Marguerite and myself."

"Who the hell's Marguerite?" I was no longer following the fellow's drift.

"Marguerite, Rumpole, is my wife. The person you call Matey."

"Oh, yes, of course." My memory was now jogged. "Why didn't you say so?" But here Ballard drew a deep breath and took me into his confidence. "She called into Chambers, having been at her refresher course in sprains and fractures. She doesn't work now, of course, but she likes to keep her hand in. And Henry told her I'd already left. At five o'clock. And he thoughtlessly added that he imagined I'd gone home because I was carrying my 'tartan bag.' He meant this very bag, Rumpole. This one!" And to remove all doubt, he slapped the small item of luggage on the floor beside him. "It's most unfortunate that Henry should have mentioned this bag at all," he went on mysteriously, "because I never take it home!"

"Oh, naturally not." I had no idea what the fellow was talking about.

"And Marguerite keeps on asking where I was going with this particular bag," he told me. "I think, quite honestly, she's curious to know about what's inside it."

"I'll look up some of the defenses to a charge of carrying housebreaking instruments." I tried to comfort him with a helpful suggestion. "Let's say you're doing evening classes in locksmithery?"

"I've told her that there are certain things, even in married life, which a man is entitled to keep to himself." He ignored my attempt

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to treat him like one of my more villainous clients and asked, "Am I within my rights, Rumpole?"

"Your right to silence," I reminded him, I hope, correctly, "it's been yours since Magna Carta."

"I'm glad you said that." Soapy Sam seemed enormously relieved. "I'm very glad to hear you say that, as a married man."

"Of course, you can't stop the other side thinking the worst," I warned him.

"Just at the moment," Ballard admitted, "that's exactly what she thinks. Really, she needs something to take her mind off it. It would make a great deal of difference to Marguerite's happiness if she saw more of you fellows in Chambers."

"She can see us at any time," I told him. "Not that we're much to look at."

"No, I mean I think it might be a terrific help if you and Hilda invited her to dinner at your place."

"Is that what she'd like?" I was greatly taken aback.

"Well. Yes."

"You're telling me in confidence that Matey would like to be asked to dinner in Foxbury Mansions?" I was still incredulous.

"Well, yes. She would."

"Don't worry," I promised him, "I won't breathe a word to Hilda about it."

"Rumpole!" Ballard gave a plaintive sort of bleat.

"Oh, well, come if you want to!" I decided to humor the man. "Dinner with She Who Must? Your Matey's got a curious idea of fun." And then I could restrain my curiosity no longer and had to ask, "What on earth *have* you got in that bag?"

"I think, Rumpole"—Ballard was standing firmly on his rights—"that's a question I prefer not to answer."

When I got back to the mansion flat, I broke the news to Hilda. "Ballard's invited himself and Matey to dinner," I said. "I fear for the man's sanity. He's carrying round a sort of tartan holdall, the contents of which he refuses to divulge. It makes him look like a Scottish pox-doctor." But She Who Must Be Obeyed had other news to impart. "Do stop prattling, Rumpole," she said. "Just come along in and listen to what she's got to say."

"Who's got to say?"

"Audrey, of course. She's got nobody but us to turn to."

I found Audrey Wystan in the living room. She was one of the

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apple-cheeked, dark-haired girls with the bright-eyed, enthusiastic appearance of those Russian dolls which come in various sizes. If you can imagine an apple-cheeked Russian doll on the verge of tears, that's how Audrey looked as I joined her. "Thank God you've come, Uncle Horace," she said in a shaky voice to me. "They've arrested Clive."

"Clive?"

"Professor Clympton. You remember?"

"Of course. The academic revolutionary."

"He wants you to appear at his trial."

At that moment I had only read about Hayden Charles's death in the paper and knew nothing of the questioning of the English professor or of his possible involvement in the matter. So I said he had made a wise choice and asked, "What sort of trial? Driving whilst tiddly?"

"They say it's murder. He thinks you'll understand."

"About murder? Well, yes. A little."

"No," Audrey said with particular emphasis, as though delivering a message, "he says you'll understand about keeping silent!"

So, accompanied by Mizz Liz Probert, as note-taker and general amanuensis, and Mr. Beazley, a small, puzzled Gunster solicitor who had probably up till then spent a blameless life conveying houses and drafting wills, I turned up in the interview room at Brixton prison to take instructions from the captive professor. I was surprised by his presence there, as the crime had taken place in the North but the trial was fixed at the Old Bailey. However, we started by discussing what seemed to be Clympton's principal concern. "The right to silence," he said, "they haven't abolished it yet?"

"Not here, old darling," I reassured him. "Only in Northern Ireland, where we've handed the forces of evil a famous victory by allowing them to rob us of one of our priceless freedoms. Sorry, I'll save that for the jury. You can still keep your mouth shut if that's what we think you ought to do. Silence can't be evidence of guilt."

"Audrey Wystan says you've won a lot of cases," Clympton began doubtfully.

"I've won more murders than you've had degrees, Professor."

"And you've got people off who refused to answer questions?" he asked anxiously.

"When I thought it was right for them to do so, yes."

"It's right now." His mouth closed firmly, his beard jutted. He seemed to have made up his mind.

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"I'll consider that," I told him, "when I know a little more about your case."

"I've decided already."

In the ensuing quiet I pulled out my watch, lit a small cigar, and told him that he had an hour of my time and if he wouldn't discuss the case perhaps he'd rather we talked about Wordsworth.

"If you like." He shrugged his broad shoulders and looked sullen. I wondered why young Audrey, and perhaps Mrs. Charles, found him so attractive, but men never know that about other men. Then I had second thoughts about the topic for the day. "No, we shan't agree about Wordsworth. Let's discuss your Vice-Chancellor, Hayden Charles. A slightly built man who crashed through some worm-eaten banisters to his death on a marble floor. Pushed, no doubt, by a stronger opponent. You didn't like him?"

"I didn't like his money-mad politics, or his way of running the University."

"And Mrs. Charles?"

"She was a good friend." The professor sounded cautious. "As a matter of fact, she reads a lot of poetry."

"Read it together, do you?" I made so bold as to ask.

"Sometimes. Mercy's very bright, for an ex-model."

"And I'm very bright for an Old Bailey hack. I can see a motive rearing its ugly head."

"I don't understand." I think he understood perfectly well, but I spelled it out all the same. "Husband finds out about his beautiful wife's infidelity. Has it out with the lover in his study on the first floor of his house. A row develops and continues on the stairs. It becomes violent. The lover's bigger than the husband. He takes him by the throat—that's where there were bruises, fingermarks but no fingerprints. The lover pushes the husband into the banisters. They're not built of reinforced concrete like the rest of Gunster University and they collapse. End of outraged husband. The lover runs out into the night. And that, my Lord, is the case of the Prosecution." I ground out the remains of my small cigar in the top of the cocoa tin provided as an ashtray.

"The Prosecution can believe that if they want to," the professor said at last, with an unconvincing sort of defiance.

"And if the jury believes it?"

"They won't have any evidence!" He was making the mistake of quarreling with his defender, so I decided to confront him with the

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reality of the matter. "I'll ask my learned junior to read us the statement of Mrs. O'Leary, the housekeeper," I said.

Mizz Probert was quick to find the document in her bundle of papers and recited, "Statement of Mrs. Kathleen O'Leary. 'I have been housekeeper at the Vice-Chancellor's house for ten years, and before that I worked for Mr. and Mrs. Charles in Oxford.' Blah blah blah. 'I have observed an intimate friendship develop between Mrs. Charles and Professor Clympton.' Blah blah. 'I heard quarreling on the stairs shortly before ten P.M. I heard Mr. Charles's voice and another man's. All I heard the other man say clearly was something about "licking the Chancellor's boots." I am quite sure I recognized Professor Clympton's voice.' "

"Do *you* think I said that, then?" the professor challenged me, and again I let him have the uncomfortable truth. "It seems probable. That's exactly what I heard you say in the hearing of half a dozen other people that afternoon over tea and sandwiches. Don't worry, old darling, I'm not going to give evidence for the Prosecution. Someone else might, though."

"Who?"

"Young Audrey Wystan, for one."

"She won't."

"You're very sure of her."

"Oh, yes. Quite sure." The professor, I decided, was behind the door when modesty was handed out.

"The professor of Classics?"

"Martin Wayfield's an old friend—" he began but I interrupted him.

"You were seen earlier by a young man called—what was his name? Peters?"

"Perkins? He'd just got a degree—" Mizz Probert found the statement with her customary efficiency and Clympton told us, with a good deal of contempt, "In business studies. He was one of Hayden Charles's favorites."

"Christopher Perkins saw Professor Clympton at about nine-fifteen P.M. He seemed to be in a hurry," Liz reminded us and I reminded the professor, "Mrs. O'Leary heard the front doorbell ring at twenty to ten. Charles called out that he was going to answer it, so she didn't see whoever arrived. Was it you?"

"No," Clympton said after a long silence.

"Then you have to tell us exactly where you went and what you did between nine-thirty and just after ten, when Mrs. O'Leary found

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the Vice-Chancellor dead." But there was no answer. "Say something to us, Professor," I begged him. "Even if it's only goodbye."

After another long silence, the professor took refuge in literature. "The sentimental approach to nature in Wordsworth's early poetry," he told me, "is his excuse for ignoring the conditions of the urban poor."

"Say something sensible," I warned him. "Because if you don't, the jury are going to find their own reasons for your silence, however much the judge warns them not to."

"Compare and contrast the deeper social message in George Eliot" was all that Clympton had to say.

"Where were you that night, Professor?" I tried for the last time, and as he still didn't answer I stood up to go. "All right, then. Keep quiet. You're entitled to. But there's one line of Wordsworth it might pay you to remember. 'All silent and all damn'd!' "

I can't help experiencing a strong feeling of relief when I walk out of the gates of Brixton Prison. It's a case of "There but for the grace of God stay I." As we emerged that morning, Mizz Probert said, "What's he got to hide, do you reckon? Guilt?"

"Or he was tucked up somewhere with that ex-model girl you were talking about and he doesn't want to give her away," Mr. Beazley suggested.

"You soliciting gentlemen have got uncurably romantic natures," I told him. "But there is one thing I can't understand about this case."

"The silence of the professor?"

"Not just that. The crime, if it was a crime, occurred up in Gunster, in the wilds of the North—your neck of the woods, Mr. Beazley. All the witnesses are up there. But the Prosecution get him committed here in London and sent for trial at the Old Bailey. What's their exquisite reason for that?"

"Search me, Mr. Rumpole." My instructing solicitor was of no assistance.

"Shall we ever know, my Bonny Beazley?" I wondered. "Shall we ever know?"

It was a time when everyone in Chambers seemed to be coming to me for advice, so that I felt I ought to start charging them for it. I was busily engaged in trying to think out some reasonable line of defense in the Gunster murder when my learned friend Claude Erskine-Brown put his head round the door to announce that his wife,

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Phillida, the Portia of our Chambers, was back from doing a corrupt policeman in Hong Kong.

"Then she can buy us a bottle of Pommeroy's bubbly on the oriental constabulary," I suggested. "We can celebrate!"

"Absolutely nothing to celebrate. In view of what she found when she got back." Claude sat disconsolately in my client's chair and told me his troubles, as a non-fee-paying client. "I'm afraid I had carelessly left, on the kitchen table, two programs for *Tristan and Isolde* at Covent Garden."

"Pretty scurrilous reading." I understood the problem at once. "Was our Portia shocked?"

"She asked whom I'd taken to the opera."

"Your wife can always get to the heart of a case, however complicated. She can put her finger on the nub!"

"Of course I'd been with Liz Probert, as you remember," Erskine-Brown confessed. "We had a talk about the future of Chambers in the crush bar at Covent Garden."

"And I'm sure that when your wife heard that, Claude, she decided not to press charges."

"That's exactly the trouble, Rumpole. She didn't hear that. In fact, to be perfectly honest with you, I didn't tell her that. I told her I'd taken Uncle Tom."

"You what?"

"I said I took Uncle Tom with me to the opera."

"Uncle Tom?" I couldn't believe my ears.

"Exactly."

"To five hours of unmitigated Wagner?" It was incredible.

"I'm afraid so."

"You must have eaten on the insane root," I told the chap, "that takes the reason prisoner."

"Well, this is the point, Rumpole." Claude suddenly became voluble in his own defense. "I knew Phillida wouldn't have taken well to the idea of Lizzie and me drinking champagne in the crush bar. Although absolutely nothing happened. I mean, Liz bolted off down the Underground almost as soon as the curtain fell. She even left me with her program, which is why I had two. But on our way from Chambers earlier, we'd met Uncle Tom and he said it was his birthday, so he was off to buy himself a chop at Simpson's in the Strand, and Lizzie said what a pity we didn't have a spare ticket, so we could take him to the opera as a treat. Of course we hadn't. But when

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Phillida asked me for an explanation—well, Uncle Tom sprang to mind."

"Erskine-Brown"—sometimes I despaired of the man ever becoming a proper, grown-up barrister—"have you learnt nothing from your long years at the Criminal Bar? If you're going to invent a defense, at least make it credible."

"The point is"—he looked desperate—"I'm terrified Philly's going to ask him."

"Ask who?"

"Uncle Tom!"

"To another opera?" I was, frankly, puzzled.

"No, of course not. Ask him if he went with me. And if she does *that*—"

"You'll be in the soup up to the ears." The situation was now crystal clear to me.

"Exactly. Unless he says he did."

"You're not going to ask Uncle Tom to commit perjury?"

"I've got no influence over Uncle Tom," Claude admitted, "but *you* have, Rumpole. You've known the old boy forever. You can put it to him as a matter of life and death. He's got to help a fellow member of the Bar."

"No, Erskine-Brown." I was shocked by the suggestion. "Absolutely and definitely no! I will not enter into conspiracy with an elderly and briefless barrister to pervert the course of justice."

"Is that your last word on the subject?" Claude was deeply disappointed.

"Absolutely my last word," I assured him.

"You expect me to plead guilty?" He seemed to have reached the end of the road.

"Throw yourself on the mercy of the Court," I advised him in as friendly a manner as possible.

"Rumpole, I know you call her Portia, but my wife's forgotten all about the Quality of Mercy. I came to you for advice."

"You came too late. The moment was when she asked you about those two programs."

"What should I have done?"

"Claimed the right not to answer any questions," I told him. "Everyone else is doing it."

At last the day arrived, awaited with a certain amount of grim foreboding, when Mr. and Mrs. Soapy Sam Ballard, on pleasure bent,

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arrived to dine with the Rumpoles in the Gloucester Road. Marguerite Ballard, the former Old Bailey matron, is a substantial woman who seems to move with a crackle of starch and a rattle of cuffs, and it's still hard to picture her without a watch pinned to her ample bosom. Her hair, done up in what I believe is known as a "beehive" coiffure, looks as though it were made of something brittle, like candy-floss. So far as weight and stamina is concerned, she is one of the few ladies who might be expected to go ten rounds with She Who Must Be Obeyed.

"The wonderful thing about marriage, Hilda," the ex-Matey said as we reached the pudding without any major disaster, "I'm sure you'd agree, is telling each other *everything*. I bet when old Horace climbs into bed with you at night—"

"You don't care for baked jam roll, Mrs. Ballard?" Hilda discouraged further inquiry into the secrets of the Rumpole marriage bed. "Baked jam roll is on my naughty list, I'm afraid," Matron pouted with disappointment. "We've all got to watch our tummies, haven't we?"

"Marguerite is very keen on keeping fit," Ballard explained. "And I'm with her one hundred percent. I've lost a good deal of weight, you know. You should see my trousers. They hang quite loose. Look!" At which point, he stood up and jerked his waistband in a distasteful demonstration.

"I was saying to Hilda, Sam," Mrs. Ballard banged on regardless, "I bet when Horace climbs into bed with her, he tells her all the events of the day. And about all the little cases he gets as a *junior* barrister."

"The little murders in provincial universities," I agreed.

"I expect you'll be taking in a leader on the Gunster murder, won't you, Horace?" Ballard sounded hopeful.

"I expect not. The client seems to think I'm the world's greatest expert on the right to silence." I looked at Soapy Sam. "You're keen on that, aren't you? Silence?"

"When I was on duty down at the Old Bailey—" Marguerite was off again—"everyone used to confide in me. All the way from the Recorder of London to the lads down in the cells. I think they found me wonderfully easy to talk to. 'Matey,' the old Recorder said more times than I care to remember, 'you're the only person I feel I can really take into my confidence on the subject of my feet.' Everyone seems to be able to confide in me except my husband." And she

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repeated, at increased volume to Ballard, the refrain, "I said everyone seems able to confide in me except you, Sam."

"So good of you to have us to dinner, Hilda." Ballard was clearly anxious to change the subject. "It's really a fun evening. We'll have to fix up a time to return your hospitality."

"Oh, please don't put yourself out," I begged him, but my voice was drowned in Marguerite's continued harangue. "Sam's a new boy, of course. But we're old hands at marriage, aren't we, Hilda? When I was married to poor Henry Plumstead, who passed away, we told each other every little thing. We just knew all there was to know about each other. I'm sure old Horace would agree with that."

"Old Horace isn't so sure." And I gave them an example of the blessings of silence. "You remember George Frobisher? Hopeless at cross-examination, so they made him a circus judge. Before your time, Bollard. Anyway, he wanted to marry this Mrs. Tempest. Frightfully struck with her, George was. I happened to recognize her as an old client with a tendency to burn down hotels for the sake of the insurance money."*

"The women he's known! Old Horace has been around, hasn't he?" Marguerite joked and was rewarded with a freezing look from Hilda.

"I took it on myself to let old George know about Mrs. Tempest's past," I told them. "He never forgave me. I don't think I've even forgiven myself. They'd probably have been quite happily married, provided he didn't leave the matches lying around. When it comes to a nearest and dearest, a profound ignorance is usually best."

I could tell by the way Hilda stood up and cleared away the plates that she wasn't best pleased by my conclusion. She then retired into the kitchen to wash up and Matey insisted on coming with her to dry. I was left with our Head of Chambers who, no doubt still hoping for a brief, reopened the subject of Gunster. "Funnily enough, I had an old uncle who lived there." I didn't find the fact especially amusing, but he went on, "Used to be an estate agent, but he had to give it up. He said you couldn't get anywhere in Gunster unless you were a Farrier. They practically run the show."

"A what?"

"Ancient Order of Farriers. Rather like the Freemasons, only more so. My uncle didn't hold with it, so they squeezed him out."

"Did he say what they did, these Farriers, or whatever they called

*See *"Rumpole and the Man of God" in The Trials of Rumpole*, Penguin Books, 1979.

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themselves?" I felt a faint stirring of interest. "Oh, all sorts of secret ceremonies, I believe," Ballard told me. "Mumbo-jumbo, Uncle Marcus said. And they had a peculiar handshake."

"Like that?" I asked. I remembered something and extended my hand with two fingers stretched out and the others bent back.

"Yes, I rather think it was. Look, wouldn't you like my assistance as a leader in that case?"

"No, thanks," I hastened to assure him. "You've been a great help to me already. Ah, Hilda. Is that the coffee?"

She Who Must Be Obeyed had come back with Marguerite and a tray. Her face was set grimly with the look of a jury returning with a guilty verdict as she ignored me totally and merely asked Marguerite if she took sugar.

"I'm going up to Gunster tomorrow," I told my wife, and, when she still ignored me, I repeated the news. "Gunster, dear. It's in the North of England. I'll probably be taking my junior, Mizz Probert, with me. You won't mind that, will you, Hilda?" In the normal course of events, this information would have set off an avalanche of protest from Hilda. Now she simply handed Ballard coffee and asked him, "Are you still keeping busy in Daddy's old Chambers?"

"So I'll probably be away tomorrow night," I intruded firmly into the conversation. "You won't be lonely, will you?" My wife looked at me but said nothing at all. So far as Rumpole was concerned, the rest was silence.

It was not until long afterwards that I discovered what had transpired in the kitchen. "Sam is up to tricks," Mrs. Ballard had confided in Hilda, "and your Horace is encouraging him." When asked for further and better particulars, Matey referred to the mysterious zipper-bag which Sam left in his Chambers and was apparently ashamed to bring home. When asked about its contents by his wife, he had replied, "Old Rumpole takes the view that married people are entitled to a little privacy. Rumpole says we all have the right to silence, even in married life."

"So you see," Marguerite summed the situation up, "it seems your Horace takes sides with husbands who get up to tricks." This information was, of course, more than enough to cause She Who Must Be Obeyed to sever diplomatic relations with my good self.

Once again I was at Gunster and in the Vice-Chancellor's house. I stood on the stairway by the broken banister and shouted at the top of my voice, "You spend your life licking the Chancellor's boots!"

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Then the kitchen door opened and Liz Probert came out, followed shortly by Mr. Beazley. We had been able to make this experiment by kind permission of the local force and Hayden Charles's widow. "You heard that?" I asked Liz.

"Clearly!"

"You could tell it was me?"

"Oh, it was you, all right. Just the sort of thing you would say!"

"Let's try it again. This time I'll come down the stairs after I've shouted and run across the hall."

"Did you say 'run,' Rumpole?" Liz was incredulous.

"Well, move fairly rapidly."

They went off to the kitchen again and I was left alone to repeat my performance and cross the hall. Then the front door was opened and Mercy Charles came into the house. "You were kind enough," I thanked her, "to say we could inspect the scene of the crime."

"It's rather a long inspection." She still looked beautiful but the creases at the corners of her eyes, which had looked like the signs of laughter, now seemed the marks of tiredness or age. "I know," I sympathized with her, "crimes take such a short time to commit and so terribly long to investigate. Do you think Professor Clympton killed your husband?"

She looked at me and, instead of answering, asked another question, "Do you think you'll get him off?"

"The professor won't tell me where he was on the night in question," I told her. "He's not being much help to me at the moment, imitating the oyster."

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"He might just be keeping quiet to protect a lady's reputation," I suggested. "Rather an old-fashioned idea, I suppose. But it's possible, isn't it?"

"That Clive was in bed with me and he doesn't want to tell anyone? Is that what you'd like me to say? Then of course I will, if it'll be a help."

"Is it true?" I had to ask her.

"What's it matter to you if it's true or not? You're a lawyer, aren't you? It's your job to get Clive off."

She was looking at me, smiling, when Liz and Mr. Beazley came out of the kitchen to join us. I asked then if they'd heard my footsteps going to the door and they said they had. "You know Mrs. Charles, of course?" And I instructed our solicitor, "Please, Beazley, on no account take a statement from her." We left the house then and

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Mercy was still standing in the hall, looking lonely and mystified—a woman who, as far as I was concerned, had just disqualified herself from giving evidence.

"What was all that about Mrs. Charles and her statement?" Liz asked me as we crossed the Gunster University quadrangle, an area which looked like a barrack square for some bleak Army of the future.

"It wouldn't have been the slightest use to us," I told her. "She'd have been torn apart in cross-examination. Silence may not always be golden, but it's worth more than lies. Lots of people need to learn that lesson, including Claude Erskine-Brown."

"Claude? What's he done?"

"Sssh! Don't say a word. I suppose it was my fault, really. I got him into it. Here we are at the library. At least books have to give up their secrets."

The library was another concrete block. We went up in a lift to a floor which hummed with word processors and computers and even had shelves of books available. The presiding librarian was seated at his desk, a small, worried man who seemed nervous of the machinery which surrounded him and was likely to take over his job.

"Sir," I addressed him with due formality, "I'm engaged on a history of the fair city of Gunster. I wonder if you have anything on the Ancient Order of Farriers?"

"Order of what?" The librarian frowned as though he didn't understand me.

"Farriers. Men who shoe horses, although I don't think there are many blacksmiths among them now. I would say there are more chairmen of committees, planners, property developers, chief constables—even, dare it be said, heads of universities. Important people in the long history of Gunster."

"I'm quite sure we haven't got anything like that." The man was almost too positive. I managed to sound amazed. "Your library is silent on this important subject?"

"Nothing about it at all. In fact, I've never heard of these blacksmiths or whatever it is you're talking about."

"Mr. Rumpole?" I heard a gentle voice beside us. "You're asking about the Farriers?" I turned to see Martin Wayfield, the Classics professor, who had stolen up on us, his fingers still keeping his place in some dusty volume of textual criticism. "It's all a lot of nonsense,

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but I can tell you a bit about them. I was once coming out of the gents in the Gunster Arms Hotel—"

"Professor Wayfield! Silence, please!" the librarian interrupted him in a panic-stricken whisper. "You know the rules of the library!"

"Oh, all right. Come over to my room. We don't want to wake up the students, do we?"

Wayfield's room, a bleak modern office mercifully buried in books, piles of papers, files, reproductions of busts from the British Museum, fading photographs of other antiquities, and posters for cruises round Greece and Turkey, seemed a haven of civilization in the grim Gunster desert. When we had settled there, he encouraged Mizz Probert to boil a kettle and make tea, filled an old pipe, lit it, and said, "What were we talking about?"

"Something that interested me strangely," I reminded him. "You were just coming out of the Gunster Arms gents—"

"Ah, yes." He took up his story again. "And there was one of these fellows, wearing a leather apron and gauntlets, with a bloody great gilded horseshoe hung round his neck, just about to slink into the private dining room to swear some terrible oath of secrecy and offer to have his throat cut if he ever let on what they were up to. They do that, apparently. Well, I recognized him as a chap who used to be"—here he started to laugh—"the University registrar. So I called out, 'Hullo, Simkins! Your old lady cast a show, has she?' And he bolted like a rabbit!"

I laughed with him and then became serious. "Hayden Charles, the late Vice-Chancellor," I asked, "was he one of the brotherhood?"

"Hayden always laughed about them. No, I'm sure he wasn't. You know, he got appointed because he was well in with the Ministry at that time. It almost seemed a condition of our grant to have Hayden. Some of the dedicated Farriers were furious about it." Then he became serious also. "So you're defending Clive Clympton. Think you'll get him off?"

"Everyone's asking that. I don't know. Do you think he pushed the Vice-Chancellor over the staircase?"

"Who can tell what anyone'll do? When they're in a temper—" Wayfield was opening a battered carton of milk to add to our tea. It looked sour, so I said I'd have mine black and then I asked if my client was popular around the University.

"The leftie students love him and there are plenty of those," Wayfield told us.

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"And the old dons must hate him?" Liz Probert suggested.

"Not really. He's pretty universally respected. Even by Sir Dennis Twineham, although they're chalk and cheese politically." He relit his pipe, which never kept going for very long. "You've probably heard stories about his private life?"

"You think they're true?" I knew what he was talking about, of course.

"Why not? Mercy Charles is a very attractive woman."

"Everyone says that. And she finds the professor a very attractive man?"

" '*Sed melior cupido quod dicti amanti. In vento et rapida scribere opertet aqua,*' " Wayfield replied unhelpfully. "Not everyone says that." And I had to ask him, "What does it mean?"

"But a woman's sayings to her lover should be written in wind and running water. It's all there. In the Latin. But it's going to be forgotten when they abolish the classics. I ought to get back to my Horace." He looked longingly at the book he had brought with him from the library. So I stood up and thanked him, rather glad to be dismissed before we had experienced his tea. Then I held out my hand, two fingers extended, the rest folded into my palm. Wayfield looked sympathetic. "You've hurt your hand?" he asked.

"Not at all." I opened my hand. "Nothing wrong with it at all." And the head of the Classics Department gave me a firm, strong, but quite normal handshake.

Back in London, Uncle Tom was, as usual, practicing putts with an old mashie niblick into the clerk's room wastepaper basket when Claude Erskine-Brown approached him in a conspiratorial fashion. My account of the conversation that follows is derived from Uncle Tom's memory of it, so I cannot vouch for its total accuracy. However, it went somewhat along these lines. Claude opened the bowling by saying, "Uncle Tom, I've got something very important to tell you. I'd be glad of your full attention."

"Not offering me a brief, are you?" Uncle Tom asked nervously. "I'm not sure I remember what to do with a brief."

"No, Uncle Tom. I want you to understand this perfectly clearly. You see, I wanted to take you to the opera."

"No, you didn't!" The old golfer was clear about that. "I did," Claude assured him, "on your birthday. I met you in the street and I wanted to ask you."

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"And if you had, I wouldn't have gone! I don't care for opera. Now if it'd been a musical comedy, it might have been different."

"Well, this was a sort of musical comedy"—Claude smiled as though to a child— "called *Tristan and Isolde.*"

"I remember old Sneaky Purbright used to be in these Chambers." Uncle Tom helped out a difficult conversation with a reminiscence. "Before your time. Sneaky had tickets for a musical comedy. They were reviving *The Bing Boys.* It was a most delightful evening." And here he broke into song, " 'If you were the only girl in the world, and I was the only boy—' "

"Well, I wanted to give you a most delightful evening," Claude assured him. "But I couldn't because I was taking someone else."

"Sneaky wanted to take someone else, too, but his wife wouldn't have liked it. So he took me. To *The Bing Boys.*"

"Well, that's just it! I wanted to take someone else to Covent Garden and I did. But my wife wouldn't have liked it. So I told her I took you."

Uncle Tom thought this over carefully and came out with, "Funny thing to say. When you didn't."

"Well, I know. But, please, Uncle Tom. If anyone asks you—particularly if anyone called Phillida Erskine-Brown asks you—if you went to the Opera House with me, I beg you to say yes."

"Oh, I see." Somewhere deep within Uncle Tom a penny dropped. "I see exactly what's going on!"

"Thank God for that!" Claude seemed greatly relieved.

"Oh, yes. I wasn't born yesterday, you know! Sneaky Purbright was having hanky-panky with old Mat Mattingley's secretary in King's Bench Walk. That meant he was out of Chambers a lot, so whenever Sneaky's wife rang up we had to say, 'He's gone over to the library to read Phipson on Evidence.' "

"But this time it's the opera," Claude was anxious to explain, "and absolutely nothing occurred."

"So. In the fullness of time"—Uncle Tom ignored the interruption—"our phrase for hanky-panky in Chambers became 'reading Phipson on Evidence.' That was our expression for hanky-panky. I mean, 'reading Phipson' meant you-know-what."

"Please, Uncle Tom, I'd be very grateful. It's really quite innocent."

"If you ask me, I'm to say I went to the opera with you." Uncle Tom was keen to cooperate.

"No," Claude was still patient, "if *my wife* asks you."

"Absolutely," Uncle Tom agreed. "I'll tell Mrs. Erskine-Brown it

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was a most delightful evening." He started to play golf again, singing the while, " 'Nothing else would matter in the world today, we would go on loving in the same old way. If you were the only girl in the world—' "

"I don't know how to thank you, Uncle Tom," Claude said, but the old man was busy completing the ditty. " 'And I was the only boy.' "

Mr. Justice Oliphant, known not particularly affectionately to the legal profession as "Ollie Oliphant," hailed from somewhere near Gunster and had done his practice in the deep North. He was a pallid, shapeless, rubbery sort of man, and every movement he made seemed to cost him considerable effort. As he made a note, he would purse his lips, frown, suck in his breath, concentrate visibly, and then, when he read through what he had written, he would rub his eyes with his fist and gasp with surprise. He was fond of treating us like a lot of Southern layabouts, full of far-fetched fantasies, who eat grapes to the sound of guitars and take siestas. He was always telling us about his down-to-earth North Country common sense and he was proud of calling a spade a spade, usually long before anyone had proved it was a toothpick.

Perhaps because he knew the area, he was chosen to preside over the Gunster Murder trial at the Old Bailey. The Prosecution was represented by Mordaunt Bissett, Q.C., a large, florid man with a plummy voice, who hunted every weekend in the season and was said to be extremely "clubbable." (There were many occasions in court when I could have clubbed the fellow, if a suitable blunt instrument were handy. He had a talent for jumping over the rules of evidence as though they were low hedges in the Bicester country.) He was assisted by a junior whose name I now forget and whose only task seemed to be fetching coffee for his learned leader when we retired to the Bar mess. The Defense was in the more than capable hands of Mr. Horace Rumpole and Mizz Liz Probert.

The trial was well attended by members of the press, and in the public gallery I spotted a number of interested academics, including Martin Wayfield, the professor of Classics. Let me begin my account of the proceedings at the point when Mrs. O'Leary, the late Hayden Charles's housekeeper, was in the witness-box and Mordaunt Bissett, examining her in chief, began a question, "Now tell us, when you were in the kitchen on the night of the murder—"

"My Lord, I object!" I was on my feet with the agility that con-

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stantly surprises my opponents. "No one's proved it was a murder! It might be anything from manslaughter to accident."

"Oh, come, come, Mr. Rumpole." The voice of the North Country comedian on the Bench tried to stifle my protests. "The jury and I will use our common sense. Mr. Mordaunt Bissett is just using the word in the indictment your client faces."

"To use that word before it's been proved isn't common sense. It is uncommon nonsense," I insisted, at which Ollie became testy. "If the Defense is going nit-picking, Mr. Rumpole, we'll call it an 'incident.' Will that satisfy you?"

"It's not me that has to be satisfied, my Lord," I answered grandly, "it's the interests of justice!"

I sat down then and the judge said, in his best down-to-earth manner, "Come along, Mr. Mordaunt Bissett. Let's get back to work, shall we, now Mr. Rumpole's had his say?" At which the mighty hunter smiled in an ingratiating sort of way and said to the witness, "During the 'incident,' you could distinguish some of the words the man on the stairs was shouting. You told us you heard him say something about 'licking the Vice-Chancellor's boots'?"

"I heard that. Yes," Mrs. O'Leary agreed.

"Could you recognize the man's voice?"

"I was sure I could."

"Whose was it?" Mrs. O'Leary looked at the tall, red-bearded man in the dock as though she regretted the abolition of the death penalty. "It was *his* voice," she said.

"You mean it was the voice of Professor Clympton?" Bissett was one for hammering home the message, and Mrs. O'Leary obliged again with, "I'm sure it was."

At this point, Bissett sat and closed his eyes, as though the verdict was no longer in doubt. Ollie Oliphant made a note of the witness's last answer, pursed his lips, gasped for air like a porpoise, and underlined the words heavily with a red pencil in a way the jury couldn't help noticing. Then he asked me if I had any questions for Mrs. O'Leary in a way which meant, "Do have a go, if you think it will do you the slightest good, young fellow, my lad!"

"Mrs. O'Leary"—I rose to my feet, more slowly this time—"did you hear any other words you could distinguish from Mr. Charles's attacker?"

"Only a few, my Lord."

"What were they?"

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"I didn't think they were important. I couldn't make sense of them, anyway."

"Let's see if we can."

"I heard him say 'oh!' loudly."

"Oh, and then what?"

"Well, it sounded like 'temporary.' And then another 'oh!' And then I think I heard, 'more is'."

"Does all this make sense to you, Mr. Rumpole?" his Lordship asked.

"Not at the moment, my Lord," I admitted.

"So this evidence is merely brought out to puzzle the jury?"

"Or perhaps, my Lord," I suggested, "to test their powers of deduction." And then I turned my attention to the witness again. "You say you heard the man shout something about licking the Chancellor's boots?"

"She's told us that!" The good old North Country patience was running out fast.

"Yes, but let me suggest *when* you heard it, Mrs. O'Leary. You heard it at teatime, did you not? When you were helping serve sandwiches to the graduates and their families. Professor Clympton said the Vice-Chancellor licked the Chancellor's boots. It was said quite clearly."

"Mr. Rumpole! How do you know it was said clearly? You weren't there, were you?" Ollie Oliphant grinned at the jury, clearly feeling he was onto a good thing. I hated to disappoint him. "As a matter of fact, I was," I told the Court. "But I'm not here to give evidence. This lady is. You heard that at teatime, didn't you, Mrs. O'Leary?"

"Yes, I did. And I thought it was a disgusting thing to say about Mr. Charles."

"So when you heard those words again from the hallway at about ten P.M., you naturally thought it was Professor Clympton shouting them?"

"I thought so. Yes." The answer was only a shade less confident.

"Because that was something you'd *already heard him say?*"

"I had. Yes."

"And if someone *else* had used the same words at nighttime, a man you never saw perhaps, you'd be likely to assume it was Professor Clympton?"

There was a long pause. The jury looked interested, Mordaunt Bissett, Q.C., still feigned sleep, and the judge didn't risk my wrath by putting in his two penn'orth.

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"I suppose so," the witness said at last.

"Even though you couldn't really recognize his voice?" I asked her. There was another long pause, and then she said, with even less certainty, "I *think* I recognized it."

"You *think* you recognized it." I gave the jury a look which was more triumphant than I felt. "Thank you very much, Mrs. O'Leary." I sat down, having done all that was possible in the circumstances. Whereupon Mr. Justice Oliphant set about trying to undo all the good I had done the professor.

"Mrs. O'Leary," the judge began in his down-to-earth manner, "let's use our common sense about this. You told Mr. Mordaunt Bissett you were sure it was Professor Clympton's voice?"

"Yes."

"And you told Mr. Rumpole you *think* it was."

"That's right."

"So does it come to this, you *think* you're sure?"

"Yes. I suppose so," the witness agreed reluctantly and the judge looked pleased with himself. "Common sense, Members of the Jury," he said with great satisfaction, "it always does it."

The next witness was young Christopher Perkins, the student who had just graduated when the "incident" took place, and while he was being summoned and sworn I took the opportunity of speaking to the beefy Prosecutor. "Mordaunt, old darling," I whispered, "a word in your shell-like. Why did the Prosecution start this case in London?"

"We've got you a North Country judge," he answered, as though that were some kind of compensation.

"Thank you very much, but the Defense sometimes asks for cases to be moved because of local prejudice against the accused. Did you think some of the jury might be prejudiced in favor of the professor if he'd been tried in Gunster?"

Mordaunt Bissett gave me a smiling "no comment" and rose to examine the young man in the neat blue suit, with slicked-down hair, rimless glasses, and a minute moustache, who had sworn to tell nothing but the truth. "Are you Christopher Perkins?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you graduate with a first-class honors in business studies last July?"

"Yes, I did."

"On the night of the incident, were you crossing the quadrangle past Twineham Buildings?"

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"Yes, I was."

"Did you see Professor Clympton?"

"Don't lead," I growled and Bissett smiled tolerantly and changed the question to "What did you see?"

"I'd looked at my watch, as I was due to meet a friend in the J.C.R. It was just nine-fifteen. Then I saw Professor Clympton coming out of his rooms. He seemed to be in a hurry. He was carrying a bag, I remember."

"Thank you, Mr. Perkins." Bissett sat down, satisfied, and I climbed to my feet with a new interest in the evidence. "We haven't heard about the bag," and I asked, "Can you describe it?"

"Just an ordinary zipper holdall. I thought he was on his way to play squash or something."

"On his way to play squash at that time of evening?"

"Well, I didn't know where he was going, did I?"

"Of course not." The judge was, as always, reluctant to exercise his right to silence.

"Well, I hope no one's suggesting he was carrying special equipment for pushing people downstairs," I said, and couldn't resist adding, "After all, we've got to use our common sense about this, haven't we, Members of the Jury?"

It was a time when everyone seemed to be carrying mysterious luggage. When I got back to Chambers, I telephoned young Audrey Wystan, who was still in residence in Gunster, working at some thesis on the importance of cosmetics in metaphysical poetry, or something of the sort, by which she hoped to further her academic career. I asked her if she wanted to help the professor, and when I got an enthusiastic and breathless "yes," I gave her certain instructions about getting into his rooms on some pretext and conducting a search.

When I left Equity Court, I saw a familiar figure hurrying through the gloaming. It was Soapy Sam Ballard, and in his hand was his tartan zipper-bag, the piece of luggage which had been the subject of so much speculation. I must confess that my curiosity overcame me and, instead of heading straight for Pommeroy's Wine Bar as I had intended, I set out, like that irreplaceable sleuth Fig Newton, to tail Ballard. I wanted to know where he was going and what he did with the mysterious holdall.

Keeping a discreet distance between us, I followed him across Fleet Street, down Fetter Lane, and through some of the narrow and

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dingier lanes behind Holborn. At last we came to an anonymous and gloomy building, which might have been a converted warehouse. Windows on the first floor were lit up, and the regular pulse of loud disco music was audible in the street below. Moving quickly and, I thought, furtively, Ballard sneaked in through the swing-doors of this establishment. I loitered in the street and lit a small cigar.

After a decent interval, I followed our Head of Chambers' footsteps in at the door and climbed a stone staircase to the first floor and the source of the music, which was, by now, almost deafening. There was another pair of doors on the landing, over which a notice was fixed which read alliteratively ANNIE ANDERSON'S AEROBOTICS ATELIER—SESSIONS TWICE NIGHTLY. I approached the doors with a good deal of natural hesitation and found that they had small, circular windows in them. Peering through, I was able to discern a hefty blonde, no doubt Annie herself, clad in a yellow track-suit, leaping up and down and shouting commands in time to the music. The Corybants she commanded were mainly young, but among them I spotted a breathless Ballard, pale and eager, leaping as best he could, clad in a bright-purple tracksuit and elaborately constructed plimsolls that had no doubt been the secret contents of his much discussed holdall. If I was laughing, my laughter was happily drowned by the dreadful sound of the musical accompaniment.

At about the same time as I was watching Ballard trip the heavy and fantastic toe at Annie Anderson's Aerobotics Atelier, young Audrey Wystan had entered Professor Clympton's rooms in Gunster. He had left a key with the porter and Audrey had borrowed it, saying that Clympton needed some things urgently for his trial. She was so anxious to help him that she practiced this small deception on my express instructions. She went through his study without finding what I had sent her to look for, but at last she opened a big built-in cupboard in the bedroom. There was a zipper-bag on the floor beneath the hanging suits and academic gowns, and when she opened it she found it to contain, to her bewilderment, a gilded horseshoe on a chain and a leather apron. She telephoned me and I got on to the industrious Beazley to tell him to get out a witness summons for the man we should have to call the next day.

So, much to his obvious irritation, a reluctant witness, looking at that moment like an extremely displeased frog, was called to the witness-box and I asked him, as soothingly as possible, whether he were Sir Dennis Twineham.

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"I am."

This simple question and answer produced an outcry from the dock, where my client, forgoing his right to silence at last, began to utter fruitless cries of "No! I forbid it!" "I'm not having it!" and "Stop it, Rumpole! What the hell do you think you're doing?" What I was hoping to do was to get the professor off, despite all his efforts to land himself in the slammer for life. Fortunately, Ollie Oliphant did something useful at last. "Mr. Rumpole," he said, showing a rare grasp of the facts of the case, "your client is creating a disturbance!"

"Is he really, my Lord?" I tried to keep calm in spite of the professor. "It's these literary chaps, you know. Very excitable natures."

"Well, he's not getting excitable in my Court. Do you hear that, Clympton? Any more of this nonsense and you'll be taken down to the cells. Now"—here the judge smiled winsomely at the witness—"did you say, *Sir* Dennis Twineham?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Some of us do our weekly shop at Twineham's Tasty Foods. Don't we, Members of the Jury?" A few of the more sycophantic jury members nodded and Ollie started to exchange reminiscences with the fat little fellow in the witness-box. "Sir Dennis, it may interest you to know, I come from your part of England."

"Is that so, my Lord?" Twineham sounded as though he had received more fascinating information.

"I used to practice often at the Old Gunster Assizes," the judge went on. "Never dreamt I'd find myself sitting down here at the Old Bailey." I refrained from telling the old darling that it came as a bit of a shock to us, too, and asked Sir Dennis if he attended by summons.

"It was served on me last night," he told us. "It was most inconvenient."

"I'm sorry, but it would be most inconvenient for my client to have to go to prison for a crime he didn't commit. Are you a Farrier?"

"A what, Mr. Rumpole?" Ollie was clearly having difficulty keeping up.

"A member of the Ancient Order of Farriers," I explained. "An organization with considerable power and influence in the City Gunster."

At which point the witness raised his arm in what looked like a mixture between a benediction and a Fascist salute and intoned, "By the Great Blacksmith and Forger of the Universe—"

"That means you are?" I assumed.

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"He doesn't permit me to answer that question." Sir Dennis was also having a go at the right of silence.

"Don't bother about the Great Blacksmith for a moment," I told him. "His Lordship is in control here and he will direct you to answer my questions."

"Provided they're relevant!" Ollie snapped like a terrier at my heels. "What've you got to say, Mr. Mordaunt Bissett?"

"I think the Defense should be allowed to put its case, my Lord." The not very learned prosecutor showed some unusual common sense. "We have to consider the Court of Appeal." Now, if there's anything which makes Ollie wake up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night it's the fear of being criticized by that august assembly. "The Court of Appeal? Yes," he agreed hastily, "you're quite right. Get on with it, then, Mr. Rumpole. The jury don't want to be kept here all night, you know."

"Are most of the important people in Gunster members of the Farriers?" I asked the witness.

"We are sworn to secrecy."

"Are they members?" I was prepared to go on asking the question all day if I didn't get an answer.

"Our Farriers are men of talent and ambition. Yes." I got a sort of an answer.

"And is membership a path to promotion in local government, for instance, and in the University?"

"A Farrier will do his best to help another Farrier, yes. All things being equal."

"And all things being equal, an ambitious English professor might do well to join you, if he had his eyes on becoming Vice-Chancellor. In the fullness of time?"

There was a long silence then. I saw my client sit with his arms crossed, his eyes on the ground. He only lifted his head to look at the witness with an unspoken protest when he answered, "Professor Clympton was one of our members. Yes. If that's what you're getting at."

"Thank you, Sir Dennis." I was genuinely grateful. "That's exactly what I was getting at. Now did you, by any chance, have a meeting on the night Hayden Charles met his death?"

"As a matter of fact, we did."

"What time did that meeting begin?"

"Our normal time. Nine-thirty."

"Where was it?"

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"The usual place."

"The Gunster Arms Hotel?" I remembered Wayfield's story.

"Yes."

"And when did Professor Clympton arrive?"

"About ten minutes before the meeting was due to begin."

"That's nine-twenty. When Hayden Charles was still alive. When did he leave?"

"We broke up around midnight. We had a few drinks when the meeting was over."

"And by eleven o'clock the police had found Hayden Charles dead. And Professor Clympton was with you all the time? From nine-thirty to midnight?"

"Yes. He initiated a couple of candidates and—"

"Thank you, Sir Dennis"—I was prepared to spare the witness further embarrassment—"you can keep the rest of your secrets intact."

I sat down and Mordaunt Bissett got up to start a quite ineffective attempt to repair the fatal damage done to his case. While this was going on, Mizz Probert asked me in a whisper what on earth a decent left-wing professor thought he was doing with a lot of old businessmen in aprons.

"He was ambitious," I told her. "But he'd rather be suspected of murder than let it be known just how ambitious. Perhaps that's why he'll never thank me. He's lost the young." And looking behind me at the man in the dock, I saw his face back in his hands, his shoulders bowed, and felt some pity for him, but more for young Audrey Wystan who had so admired his outspoken independence of the University establishment.

The case of Claude Erskine-Brown was not going so happily. He and Uncle Tom were both in our clerk's room when Dianne announced that Mrs. Erskine-Brown was on the phone and wanted to speak to the aged golfer in the corner. I was just back from a day's work at the Bailey and I saw Uncle Tom take the call, and was a witness to the agony of Erskine-Brown as he heard how it was going.

"Oh, Mrs. Erskine-Brown. Where are you? Winchester Crown Court. Just checking up? Oh." And then Uncle Tom obliged Claude by saying, "When you were in Hong Kong, your husband did take me to a show. It was very kind of him indeed. It was my birthday. What was the show called? Just a moment—" Here he put his hand

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over the instrument and whispered to Claude, "What was it called?" And received the answer, *"Tristan and Isolde."*

"Oh, yes." Uncle Tom was back in contact with our Portia. "*Tristan* and somebody else. No, Claude's not here at the moment. I think he's over in the library. Reading Phipson on Evidence. Yes. It was a most delightful show. *Tristan,* yes. I'm very fond of a musical, d'you see?"

"Uncle Tom!" Claude, in spite of himself, cried out, fearing what was coming. "The tunes are unforgettable, aren't they?" Uncle Tom blundered on. "I was singing to myself all the way home." And here he burst into song with "Nothing else would matter in the world today, we would go on loving in the same old way. If you were the only girl in the world—"

This is not, of course, the best known number from Wagner's *Tristan*. Uncle Tom's voice faded as the phone was put down at the other end, and he turned to Claude and asked, amazed that his deception hadn't met with more success, "Did I say something wrong?"

All over the place, the truth was emerging despite the conspiracy of silence. Walking to the bus stop, I caught up with Ballard and greeted him with a cry of "Hop, skip, and jump!"

"What?" Our leader look startled.

"Or can't you do it without the purple jumpsuit?" I asked politely. "I bet that garment skips of its own accord."

"Rumpole!" Ballard looked stricken. "You know everything!"

"Pretty well."

"Marguerite was so insistent that I should get what she calls my 'naughty tummy' down," he began to explain his extraordinary behavior, "she practically talked of nothing else."

"I know." I understood.

"At last I could stand it no more. I saw an advertisement for this 'studio.' It seemed so jolly. Music and—"

"Young ladies?"

"That's why I kept it from Marguerite. I thought she might not appreciate—"

"You skipping about with young ladies? I think she'd admire your heroism, Bollard. Tell her you made the supreme sacrifice and got into a purple jumpsuit just for her. And you've lost weight?"

"A few inches." He sounded modestly pleased. "As I told you, my trousers hang loose."

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"Superb! Tell her, Bollard. Boast of it to her."

"That's really your advice to me, Rumpole?"

"Why not? Bring it all out into the open, old darling. The time for secrets is over."

"Although steps may be taken soon to bring the law into line with good old-fashioned common sense, Members of the Jury"—Ollie Oliphant's summing-up was drawing to a close—"Professor Clympton has chosen not to enter the witness-box and give evidence. But you have had the testimony of Sir Dennis Twineham." He said this as though the Holy Ghost had given tongue in Number One Court at the Old Bailey. "Sir Dennis and I come from the same part of England. We have a rule up there in the North, Members of the Jury: Use your common sense. Sir Dennis isn't a stranger to us, is he? I expect some of you brought your sandwiches in Twineham's bags, didn't you? And Sir Dennis is quite sure the professor was at the meeting when the deceased man fell from the stairs. Has he any reason for inventing? Use your common sense, Members of the Jury! Now. Take all the time you need to consider your verdict."

With these words ringing in their ears, the jury retired and I went out into the corridor to light a small cigar, walk up and down, and hope for victory. As I was so engaged, I met the Professor of Classics wandering vaguely and I offered to buy him a coffee in the Old Bailey canteen. This fluid now comes from a machine which also emits tea, cocoa, and soup, these beverages being indistinguishable. We sat at a table in a corner of the big room, among the witnesses, families, barristers, and police officers engaged in other cases, and I said, "You're taking a lot of interest in these proceedings."

"Why not?" Wayfield filled his pipe but didn't get around to lighting it. "Clive Clympton's a valued colleague."

"Hayden Charles wasn't such a valued colleague, was he?"

"What do you mean?" Wayfield frowned as though over a particularly obscure Latin text.

"I've been thinking about those odd words Mrs. O'Leary heard. 'Oh, temporary,' she said, if you remember. 'Oh, more is.' As I told you, I don't know much Latin, but didn't Cicero express his disgust with the age he lived in? Didn't he say, *'O tempora, O mores!'?* Oh, our horrible times and our dreadful customs!—or words to that effect?"

"Cicero said that. Yes."

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Wayfield seemed surprised I knew such things, and I wouldn't have done had I not spent a good ten minutes with *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.

"And did a Classics professor," I asked him then, "shout it on the staircase, furious with the man who was going to stop its study at Gunster University?"

"I don't understand what you're saying, Mr. Rumpole." For once, I thought, in his life Martin Wayfield wasn't telling the truth. He lied without any talent.

"Don't you, Professor Wayfield? 'Licking the boots of the Chancellor' and turning Gunster into a training-ground for bankers and accountants? You heard Clympton say that and you thought it was a pretty good description of Charles's activities. So good, in fact, that it was worth shouting at him again on the stairs."

"Mr. Rumpole, you argued Clive's case very well, but—" Wayfield tried an unconvincing bluster which also didn't suit him.

"But the Vice-Chancellor was seized by the throat with a strong grasp. I've felt your handshake, Professor. He was thrown against the banister by someone who thought all he believed in, his whole life, was threatened. Isn't that possible?"

"Just who is suggesting that?"

"Oh, no one but me. If anyone else does, I'll make them prove it. There's really no evidence, except for a rough translation from the Latin."

Wayfield said nothing to that, but he took out his diary, tore a scrap of paper out of it, and wrote something down. "Look, if you're ever in Gunster again," he said, "do ring me. We could have dinner. I'll give you my number."

"Thank you, Professor. I think I'll give Gunster a wide berth from now on."

"Here's the number anyway." And he handed me the scrap of paper, just as Mizz Liz Probert, whom I had left downstairs to await events, came to tell us that the jury were back with a verdict.

"I suppose I'm expected to thank you." Clive Clympton parted from me with a singular lack of grace.

"No need. I get people off murder charges every day of the week. It's just part of the Rumpole service."

"Couldn't you have done it without Twineham?"

"Probably not. Silence may be golden, but it can also be extremely dangerous. It tends to give people ideas."

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So Professor Clympton went back to Gunster. Whether or not he ended up with Mercy Charles I don't know, but young Audrey Wystan took up a teaching job in America and we didn't see her again. In due course Martin Wayfield retired to Devon to write a new life of Cicero, but died before the task could be completed. Claude Erskine-Brown's difficulties were solved more easily. He told me that Phillida and he were on excellent terms again. "How did you manage that?" I asked him. "Did you teach Uncle Tom to sing the love duet?"

"Oh, no. I told her the truth. I said you'd persuaded me to take Liz Probert secretly to the opera to settle a problem in Chambers. I made it perfectly clear that the whole wretched business was entirely your fault." It is the touching loyalty of my fellow hacks that's such a feature of the great camaraderie of the Bar.

On the day I won *R. v. Clympton,* the Gunster murder, I returned home to the mansion flat, went into the kitchen, poured myself a sustaining glass of Chateau Fleet Street, and hoped to enjoy a post-mortem on my triumph with She Who Must Be Obeyed as she prepared supper for the hero of Court Number One.

"You know what first gave me the idea?" I told her. "When the Prosecution moved the case to London. It wasn't for the professor's benefit; they were afraid of Farriers on the jury who might let their fellow Farrier off. You see the point, don't you, old thing?" Hilda answered with a stunning silence.

"Secrets! It's extraordinary, Hilda, the secrets people think important. Take my professor, now. He'd rather risk prison than break his oath of secrecy to a lot of middle-aged businessmen tricked out in fancy dress in a hotel dining room. You follow me?" But once again, answer came there none. "Of course, he wanted it all ways. He wanted to be the hero of the young. And he wanted the secret held of the Ancient Order of Farriers. Do you see the point?" I sent out words like soldiers to battle and they never returned. "Oh, thanks," I said, "always glad of your opinion, Hilda. So he resorted to silence. It's what everyone does when life gets too difficult. Take cover in silence. Wrap silence round your ears like a blanket. If you say nothing, you can't come to any harm. But no one can keep silent forever. You get lonely. You have to say something sometime. Unless you're struck dumb by some unfortunate disease. Is that your problem, Hilda?" But my wife, peeling potatoes, seemed unaware of my existence.

"And what about the other professor? The Latin scholar. He didn't

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say much, but I could see he found it difficult to keep quiet, extremely difficult. Look at this." I showed her Wayfield's diary page and got no reaction. "He gave me his number and wrote something on it. A Latin quotation. Of course. *Atque inter silvas Academi quaerere verum.* I might find my old school dictionary." I went and found a Latin dictionary on a shelf in the living room. It still smelled of ink and gob-stoppers. When I returned to the kitchen, the telephone on the wall was ringing. Hilda held it to her ear and said, "Yes. Oh, hello, Marguerite."

"A miracle," I muttered as I looked up the Latin words, "she speaks!" In fact, Hilda was talking quite jovially to the telephone. "Rumpole told Sam to confess it all to you, he did that?" There was a further miracle—She Who Must Be Obeyed was smiling. "Gymnastics? Lost four inches? Plimsolls in the bag? Well, that is a relief, dear, isn't it?"

I had made sure that *silva* was a wood, and *quaerere* meant to seek, when Hilda put down the telephone and said, "I hear you told Sam Ballard you didn't believe in secrets between married people."

"Secrets between married people? Perish the thought!" I protested and went back to the dictionary. "*Verum.* Well, that's obvious."

"Sam's trousers hang loose." Hilda had got onto a sensitive subject. "Your trousers don't hang loose, do they, Rumpole? Take up gymnastics. Lose four inches round the waist like Sam Ballard!"

"You want me to hop around in a bright-purple jumpsuit? To the sound of disco music. Perish the thought!" I repeated. And then I tried a rough translation of Wayfield's message: " 'And seek for truth in the groves of Academe.' " You see? Even the Professor of Classics couldn't keep things to himself.

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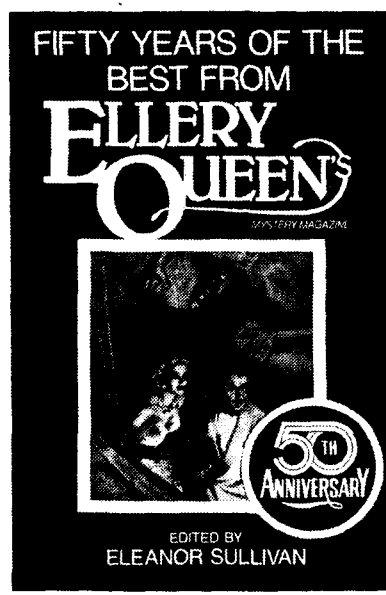

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a ***NEW*** short story by

PETER LOVESEY

"If I may be so bold, gentlemen," the steward remarked when he returned with individual bottles and tulip-glasses which he proceeded to fill, "your surname is familiar. Would you by any chance be related to Sir Angus McDinnie, the painter, who died so tragically the other day?"

Alastair managed to convey as he spoke that this was not the first time, nor the tenth, that he had been asked the question. "His sons."

"Ah—I wondered, sir. A great loss to the world of art. I was reading his obituary in The Scotsman *only yesterday. Dreadful."*

"He didna' suffer," said Hamish.

"I suppose not, sir," said the steward, and it sounded more like a question than a statement . . .

BEING OF SOUND MIND

by PETER LOVESEY

"On your feet."

"What?"

"They called our numbers."

Hamish McDinnie, fifty-eight and about to board an airliner for the first time, scanned the departure lounge, dabbing his forehead with pieces of a Kleenex that he had shredded while sitting there. "Nobody else is moving."

"They're tourist class." His brother Alastair waited a second, and then said in a tone that excluded the possibility of defiance, "Move."

Fit and forthright from thirty years of teaching what he persisted in calling gym, Alastair had always been the dominant brother, in

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spite of being two years Hamish's junior. On his fifty-fifth birthday, Alastair had taken premature retirement, cannily saving himself from hernias, cartilage problems, and the teaching of arithmetic to first-years. He had settled for a dignified departure when he could still referee both halves of a football match. Now he was secretly relishing displaying his athletic torso beside the pool at the Nyali Beach Hotel. His only concern was that his blond hair, brushed back like Tarzan's, might acquire a reddish, artificial hue in the merciless African sun.

They passed through to the aircraft. The first-class steward examined their boarding-passes, greeted them by name, and insisted on stowing away their hand luggage. All this attention made Hamish feel uncomfortable. He wished they had booked as tourists like the other people. He was conscious that the steward's clothes fitted better than his own. Normally he didn't wear a suit at all. He serviced lawnmowers for a living. Being fat, he felt more comfortable in overalls. The pity was that you couldn't wear overalls in the first-class section. The old black pinstripe he had put on had come in useful for the funeral, but it was tight across the back and the trousers didn't meet at the waist. The gap was bridged by a safety-pin hidden by a belt.

The steward asked if they would care for a glass of champagne. Hamish shook his head, whereupon Alastair said, "He'll take a glass. We both will." Then he informed Hamish, "It's complimentary in the first class."

"If I may be so bold, gentlemen," the steward remarked when he returned with individual bottles and tulip-glasses which he proceeded to fill, "your surname is familiar. Would you by any chance be related to Sir Angus McDinnie, the painter, who died so tragically the other day?"

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"Ah—I wondered, sir. A great loss to the world of art. I was reading his obituary in *The Scotsman* only yesterday. Dreadful."

"He didna' suffer," said Hamish

"I suppose not, sir," said the steward, and it sounded more like a question than a statement.

"He passed out from the fumes before the flames reached him," Hamish went on to explain. "As, eh—as—" He looked to his brother to supply the word.

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"Asphyxia," said Alastair. "However, our father lived to a splendid age."

"So I saw in the paper, sir."

"You have to be positive," Alastair stressed. "He made the best of his life, enjoyed himself to the end. His whisky, his good food, his smoking—even if it was the smoking that did for him finally."

"A cigarette-end?"

Alastair nodded. "Any art studio is a tinder-box, unfortunately."

"I suppose he was getting absent-minded."

"Not at all. He was mentally alert. Even in his ninetieth year he was of sound mind."

"Sound mind, aye," Hamish affirmed.

"That must be a consolation," said the steward. "Well, the circumstances are sad, but I'm honored to have you aboard, gentlemen."

"How many hours to Nairobi?" Hamish asked.

"My brother is nervous of flying," Alastair said with a superior smile, adding, without a trace of Scotland in his accent, "My wee brother."

After they were airborne and a meal had been served, Alastair got up from his seat.

"What are ye doin'?" Hamish asked in alarm.

"Having a stretch. You're allowed to get up, you know. You should try it."

Hamish grimaced and shook his head.

Upright in the aisle, Alastair spread his arms as if about to lead a gym class. "I think I should tell you that I intend to make the most of this trip. So should you. The funeral is over. We gave Father a decent sendoff, and now we're entitled to relax."

"True," admitted Hamish.

"He would have wished it," said Alastair. "He would have wanted to reward us for our pains."

"Och, aye."

"I booked a five-day safari to Tsavo National Park."

Hamish frowned. "You didna' tell me that."

"Don't tell me you're scared of animals as well as aeroplanes."

Hamish was silent.

"You're forever going on about the wildlife films on the television. This is the real thing."

Somewhere above the Mediterranean, the aircraft gave a lurch and the FASTEN SEATBELTS signs lit up. Over the public-address

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system the captain's voice announced in a benign tone that they were experiencing a small amount of turbulence, and this was quite normal. Without conspicuous haste, Alastair resumed his seat.

Hamish pressed his hands over his knees. He had felt from the outset that this holiday was a mistake. Now he was preparing to meet his Maker. "We did nothing to be ashamed of," he said to his brother. "Did we?"

"It's only turbulence," said Alastair with his dismissive gym master's air. "We're simply passing through some high cloud."

Toward the end of the flight, when the aircraft had started its descent, the steward paused in front of the brothers and delivered a tribute to their father. "He was certainly the finest Scottish landscapist since the war and perhaps the finest this century. If it doesn't seem insensitive to say so, I just hope none of his major work was lost in the fire."

"All of the finished work survived," said Alastair.

"The good stuff was kept in the house," Hamish put in.

"Wasn't the house destroyed, sir?"

"No. The fire was in the studio."

Alastair explained, "The studio was a free-standing workshop in the garden."

"Ah. I follow you now."

"The paints and easels were destroyed, and some things he was currently working on, but they weren't of any merit. He hadn't produced anything of merit for ten years or more. He was an old man."

The steward, who seemed to rate himself as an art expert, remarked, "Monet was in his eighties when he painted those vast canvases of water-lilies."

"Monet was exceptional," said Alastair.

"Picasso?"

"A con-man."

On recliners under the palms at the Nyali Beach Hotel in Mombasa, the sons of Sir Angus McDinnie sipped chilled drinks and observed the other guests. The air was heavy with the smell of suntan lotion.

"All these lassies," murmured Alastair, who was beginning to acquire a tan.

"What about them?"

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No answer came. They lapsed into silence for a time. Above them, sparrows cheeped from invisible places behind the serrations in the bark.

"Father taught me to swim when I was nine," Hamish reminisced, his thoughts more on the pool than the lassies. "He took me into Loch Lomond and held me by the back o' m'breeks and made me kick m'legs."

"I remember. He could have been a fine gym instructor."

"He was better off painting."

"You're telling me!"

After a moment, Hamish commented, "We wouldna' be here but for him."

"That's a fact."

"I'm thinkin' o' the will."

"Mm." Alastair was less disposed than his brother to think of the will.

"The last will," persisted Hamish.

Under the next tree, a topless sunbather jerked up from her recliner as a bird-dropping moistened her back.

Hamish hadn't noticed. "He came to his senses at the end. The other was a travesty. Isn't that a fact, Ally? A travesty?"

Alastair's attention was elsewhere. "What are you saying?"

"The will. The first will. I wouldna' begrudge the pictures goin' to the nation," said Hamish. "But every last penny of his money to the National Gallery of Scotland? That would have been out of order."

Under close scrutiny, the woman wiped her back with a tissue and then sank face down again.

That distraction over, Alastair picked up the conversation. "It's the sort of injustice that can happen under English law. If we'd all remained north of the border instead of moving down to Cornwall, you and I would have been entitled to our *jus relictae*."

Hamish blinked.

"*Jus relictae*. An automatic one-half share of the estate. It's a right enshrined in Scots law. We'd have got a quarter each, which is less than we finally inherited, but I wouldn't have complained. The English system guarantees nothing for the family."

"Thank the Lord he listened to you, Al."

"We are his sons."

"Aye. We had the right."

Alastair drew himself up from the sun-bed and leaned toward his

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brother, speaking in a low voice inaudible to anyone else. "We need to be clear about this, Hamish. All we did was consult Father and get a sense of his intentions. The decision to draw up a new will was his alone. In the wisdom of old age he decided that everything should remain in the family. I phrased it precisely according to his wishes and he signed it. And let this be understood, Hamish—he was of sound mind."

"So he was, rest his soul. Of sound mind."

Alastair resumed the preferred tanning position.

After an interval, Hamish said, "The National Gallery willna' contest it—will they?"

"Why should they?"

"It was in *The Scotsman*."

"What was?"

"About everythin' goin' to the nation."

"That was years ago. People change their minds. Father did."

"What about his solicitors?"

"For pity's sake, Hamish. What are you worrying about now?"

"They could make it sticky. They don't know about the new will. They have the old will in their safe."

"He canceled it. *'I hereby revoke all wills made by me at any time heretofore.'* "

The safari in Tsavo National Park was hugely enjoyable. Elephants in abundance, zebra, buffalo, and rhino stood untroubled by the minibuses that cruised through their domain. Hamish had to admit that it was better than the television. And the safari lodges were infinitely more luxurious than he had imagined. Even the malt whisky was acceptable. Over a glass one evening at Kilaguni Lodge, Hamish was moved to say, "Da would have enjoyed this."

"He would never have traveled so far," said Alastair. "The only time he crossed the sea was that trip to Mull in 1954. You and I can be grateful that he was prudent with his money."

"True."

"Mind, I could have used some of it years ago, when I was struggling with a mortgage."

"Our Da wasn't one to featherbed his sons." Hamish swirled the whisky in the glass. "D'ye think we were a disappointment to him, Al?"

"In what way?"

"We didna' have an ounce of art in us."

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This was too sweeping for Alastair. "Art isn't restricted to painters. Teaching is an art, in my opinion. Besides, I value civilized behavior higher than any so-called art, and certainly higher than facility with a paintbrush. Loyalty, for instance. You and I devoted ourselves to Father's well being in his last years."

"You and I?"

"Shall we have another and then retire? It's an early start in the morning."

Under his mosquito net, Hamish found sleep difficult to achieve. His mind had fixed on his father and the last years. There was nothing, he kept telling himself, to trouble his own conscience. For Father's sake, he had never moved out of the family home. Their mother had died when they were still at school and Father had moved south, as far south as possible, to Cornwall, where the light was supposed to be ideal for painting. Hamish, then fifteen, had left school. Father had needed looking after, insisting that the practicalities of everyday living were inimical to great art. Hamish had supplied his needs, fitting them around a series of part-time jobs. Father's dependence had not lessened as the years passed. And sadly, the justification for Hamish's servitude had become less and less apparent.

By the end, the painting had amounted to nothing. The old man would take a sheet of watercolor paper and spend the morning soaking it and trying hamfistedly to attach it to a drawing board with gummed-paper strips. Watercolor paper had to be stretched, and the process—which in years past had been simple to perform—made such demands on his energy and concentration that he would exhaust himself. Unsightly wrinkles would appear in the paper. The gummed strips would attach themselves to his sleeves, his hands, his feet, the floor—everywhere except the board.

Because correct preparation was, according to Father, the responsibility of the artist, the stretching could not be entrusted to Hamish. And by the time the task was done, and the paper ready, he didn't paint anything at all. He might make a few pencil marks of no obvious merit or significance. There was never any time left for painting. After lunch he always fitted in a nap on the studio couch. About three in the afternoon he would strip the paper from the board and let it drop on the floor. And when Hamish swept the studio each evening, he would pick up the discarded sheet and stack it on the pile beside the plan chest under the window.

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Finally, depressed by the futility of it all, he had telephoned Alastair, who had his own house on the other side of town. Truth to tell, Alastair had not been the devoted son he claimed; he had been an infrequent visitor since the public announcement that the National Gallery of Scotland was to inherit the entire estate. However, on learning that Father was exhibiting obvious signs of senility, he had cycled over. Hamish had shown him the studio and the ever-mounting pile of discarded paper.

"It occurs to me," Alastair had said after some thought, "that this may be a symptom of something else."

"What's that?"

"When did he last have his eyes tested?"

"I couldna' say. You know what he's like about anything like that. He's always too busy, he says."

"To my recollection, he's been wearing the same glasses for a quarter of a century. The reason he can't paint is that he can't see out of them."

"He'll nae have them changed."

"You're right," Alastair had said. "You're definitely right about that."

The safari was over, but they still had another week under the palms at the Nyali Beach Hotel. The Kenyan staff flitted among the recliners delivering milkshakes and chilled drinks to the basking guests. Alastair's hair, as he had feared, was acquiring russet streaks, so he wore his safari hat except at mealtimes. Three gold chains now adorned his deep-bronzed chest.

"Admit it—you've enjoyed all this," he challenged Hamish.

"All right, I have."

"You'll be back next year."

"I'll have to think about that."

"Don't be so wimpish, Ham. You can afford it. You could afford to stay here permanently if you wanted, for the rest of your life."

"I wouldna' say that."

"Of course you could. We're millionaires now, even after the taxes have been paid. Be realistic, man. There are forty-seven pictures to sell if we want. The galleries are queuing up to buy them."

"We couldna' sell the pictures, Al."

"Why not?" demanded Alastair on a soaring note of disbelief. "We own them."

"It's his work. It shouldna' be split up. Da wouldna' like that."

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"Da wouldna' like that," Alastair mimicked him. "Snap out of it, man—you're grown up now. You can do as you want. I tell you, I'm going to sell my share of the pictures, so they'll be split up anyway."

"We owe it to Da to keep them together," Hamish tried to insist.

"We owe nothing to Dad. He would have seen us starve."

Hamish was deeply shocked. "How can ye say that?"

"It's true. You slaved for the whole of your life to give him the freedom to paint. Yes, slaved. He paid you nothing and he would have left you nothing."

"He left us everything, Al."

"Only because I insisted on it. I bought the will form and filled it in and put the pen in his hand and called in the postman and the gardener to be witnesses."

Hamish reached for his shirt. His skin was out in goose-bumps, as if a breeze had sprung up. "But Da knew what he was signing, did he not?"

"He signed. Just look at those lassies standing beside the pool. They might as well not be wearing anything." Alastair sat up and slipped his feet into his flip-flops. "See you presently."

Dinner that evening was a buffet outdoors on the terrace, but in no way a night off for the chef. A feast that must have been hours in the preparation, as spectacular as anything the McDinnies had ever seen, was ranged on long tables, brilliantly lit, for the darkness around them was total. And no mosquitoes threatened.

The brothers had a table on the opposite side of the terrace. Alastair's white Christian Dior shirt, open at the neck to display the chains, enhanced his tan. He had purchased it that afternoon in one of the hotel boutiques. The light-blue canvas trousers and white espadrilles were from the same source.

Hamish was in the pinstripe he had worn for the flight.

"That thing *again?*" said Alastair.

"What's wrong with it?"

"You're no better than Dad."

"What do you mean?"

"You'll never break out. You're locked into yourself."

Later, when they were drinking coffee and waiting for the tribal dancers to perform, Hamish said, "You ought to show more respect for our Da." By his standard it was a strong rebuke, and he immediately softened it. "Lord knows he wasna' easy to understand.

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When you bought him that magnifier, he ought to have shown some gratitude."

"I've never given that another thought," said Alastair, smiling at two unaccompanied women at the next table.

"Aye, but you gave it plenty of thought at the time, about Dad's eyesight, and you went to all the trouble of finding the thing."

"It was only a magnifying lens on a stand," Alastair said dismissively. "I got it secondhand from a jeweler. It looked as if it would come in useful."

"Did I tell you he never used it? He ignored it. He left it on the plan chest where you placed it."

Alastair was quick to make a correction. "What do you mean—I *placed it?* I don't recall placing it anywhere. Anyway, I've dismissed it from my mind, and so should you."

Hamish didn't dismiss it. Alastair's attitude troubled him. It was unlike his brother to shrug off the credit for a generous act. The magnifier had been a handsome present, a five-inch-diameter lens mounted on an angle-poise stand which would certainly have enabled Father to have got a better view of his painting if he had used it. Father? That old stick-in-the-mud? Fat chance! Curious, really, that Alastair should ever have supposed it would be used.

Whatever Alastair claimed, he it was who had positioned the magnifier on the plan chest under the window. Father had never touched it, and nor had Hamish. Hamish had been under firm instructions never to tamper with anything in the studio. He'd been allowed to sweep the floor. Cigarette-ends and discarded sheets of paper he was permitted to touch. Nothing above floor-level.

Like Father, he had ignored the magnifier's existence. In fact, one afternoon some months before—it must have been March or April, when the winter was turning to spring—the thing had succeeded in deceiving him. Father had quit the studio early, leaving his litter of cigarette-butts, crumpled tissues, and paper. Outside, the sun lingered, and when Hamish as usual had picked up the discarded sheet of watercolor paper to place it on the pile beside the plan chest, he had noticed what he thought was a paint-mark on the surface of the top sheet, a blue-edged oval.

Amazing. Father hadn't got so far as using paint for months, if not years. It was quickly obvious that the effect was caused by sunlight through the lens. The blue of the spectrum. Stupid. Hamish had laughed out loud at his own mistake.

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They flew home at the end of the week, Hamish in his suit, nervous as before, Alastair laden with duty-free. In the first-class section they were greeted by the steward they had met on the flight out.

"What a coincidence!" Hamish said.

"Not in the least," Alastair informed him. "They work to a roster. He'll have done this each Saturday since we left. This is the turn-round of the flight out."

As if to confirm this, they were brought the morning papers from England. "We haven't seen a paper or watched television for three weeks," Alastair told the steward.

"You haven't missed much," the steward replied. "Petrol prices are up again and the West Indians won the cricket. Ah." He snapped his fingers. "But there was an item in the week about your father, or rather the fire that killed him. What was it now? The investigation team discovered how the fire started, and it wasn't a cigarette as everyone had supposed. Apparently a pile of drawing paper caught fire."

"That must have been a cigarette," said Alastair.

"No."

"It's obvious."

"No. Let me get this right. The paper was underneath a window. It was something to do with a magnifying lens that your father used in his work. The sun shone through and set light to the paper. One of those freakish accidents that no one could guard against."

"But I don't see how—" Hamish started to say, and then on a long, despairing note he said, "Oh, no—"

Alastair, more in control, commented, "Really, it makes no difference how the fire started. It could have been an electrical fault or anything. It doesn't bring Father back."

Hamish covered his eyes and vented his grief in a high moan of distress that was covered by the sound of the aircraft engines. At first he hadn't been able to fathom how the faint oval of blue light he had seen on the watercolor paper all those months ago could have intensified to the pinpoint beam sufficient to start a fire. Then, agonized, he understood. He had created the conditions himself by stacking up the paper, a sheet at a time, day after day, for months on end. The higher the stack, the smaller and brighter the pool of light. He just hadn't registered how dangerous it was. Some days there hadn't been any sunlight at all. On the others, he had ignored it. Having once mistaken the blue outline for a paint-mark, he'd

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resolved not to be caught again. But one day in summer the stack had reached the focal point, the level at which it ignited.

Alastair muttered, "Drink your champagne and shut up. It's not the end of the world."

"It was murder," Hamish said.

"Keep your voice down. Murder with a magnifying glass? That's a laugh."

"You meant to kill him and you did."

"Correction. We did."

"*You* brought the thing into the studio. *You* stood it beside the paper-stack."

"And you raised the level of the stack, little by little, day by day," said Alastair, "so let's have no pointing of the finger."

"I had no idea."

"You mean you didn't think. As I told you before, you're a slave of routine. Just like Father." He switched off the reading light. "Better get some sleep while we can. We're going to be busy when we get back."

"Why?"

"For God's sake, Ham! We're the executors. We have to administer the will. We'll get nothing until we're granted probate."

That, at any rate, was true. They had paid for the holiday on spec, out of their own savings.

Hamish didn't sleep. He closed his eyes and remembered his father, not the shambling figure in carpet slippers struggling with gummed paper, but the man he had seen in his prime, reading the riot act to the Royal Academy on the subject of abstract art, which he had likened in its blandness to Muzak. A tyrant in public and private life. Easier to respect than to love.

It seemed only a short interval before the steward slid the blinds from the windows, admitted the morning sun, and handed out the breakfast menus.

"Get home and get a few hours' rest," Alastair ordered, as if Hamish were the school football team. "We'll meet tonight and start sorting out Dad's papers."

The train had reached Penzance.

Soon after getting home, Hamish phoned Alastair. "I wanted to catch you before you got to bed."

"What now?"

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"The will."

"What about the will?"

"I mean the one you got him to sign. Did ye happen to keep a copy?"

"Yes, of course."

"That's all right, then."

After some hesitation, Alastair said, "Is there a problem?"

"No problem," Hamish said evenly. "So long as the copy you have is legal."

"*Legal?* Of course it isn't legal. The only legal copy is the original, the actual document he signed and the witnesses signed. That's the one we need for the Probate Office. That's among his papers."

"If it is, I havena' found it."

"It must be. In the writing desk where he kept his bank statements and everything. I put it there myself less than a month ago. Have another look. I'll wait."

After a sufficient pause, Hamish said, "It isna' there."

"For crying out loud! Where else could it be?"

"I'm trying to think, Al. I'm just a little afeared— Och, no, it couldna' be!"

"What are you saying, you gibbering idiot?"

"You know what he was like, Al. He may have been slower in his old age, but he was of sound mind. We agreed on that."

"Come to the point, man!"

"I'm trying to, Al. It isn't so easy to remember. Is that the jet-lag? Da kept the things he valued in his pocket. His wallet and his cigarettes. Sometimes he asked for his checkbook and his bank statements. I'm just wondering if I handed him the will together with the bank statements."

"He took the will to the studio?"

"He didna' know there would be a fire, Al."

The voice became hysterical. "God, I don't believe this!" In the shocked silence, Hamish fancied he could hear the thought process in his brother's brain. The second will was destroyed, so the previous will would take effect. The entire estate would go to the National Gallery of Scotland. The pictures, the house, the money, everything. "I'm coming over. This can't be true!"

The phone clicked as Alastair rang off.

Hamish sat back in Father's chair. "It isna' true," he said to himself, "but it's right."

He picked up the will he had found among Father's papers, the

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second will that Alastair was so exercised about, the top copy, signed and witnessed. He ripped it in half and then into quarters. Continuing to tear it into smaller pieces, he took them to the toilet, dropped them in, and flushed them away.

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DETECTIVERSE

BLIMY!

by WILLIAM DANIELS

Rumpole said to his client, a thief,
Who was beautiful beyond belief,
"If I'm to befriend you,
If I'm to defend you,
I must have a look at your brief."

She looked angry till Horace said, "Ma'am,
A brief is a legal exam."
Then said she between snickers,
"I thought briefs meant knickers,
And I'm a good girl, I am."

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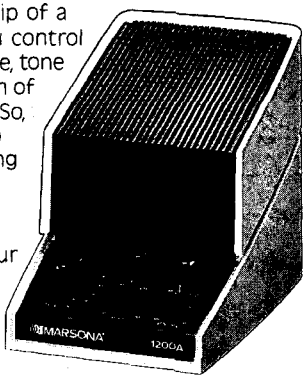

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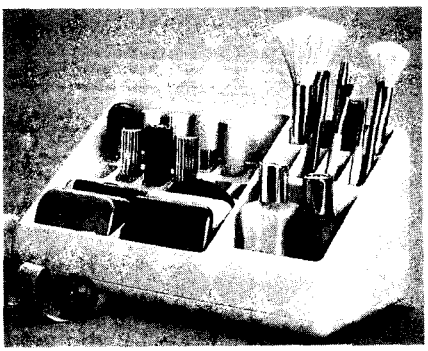

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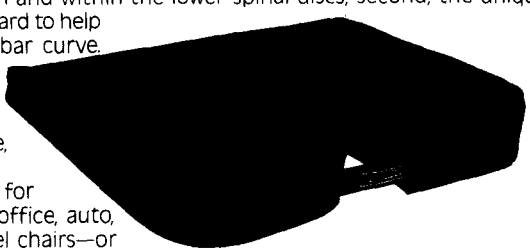

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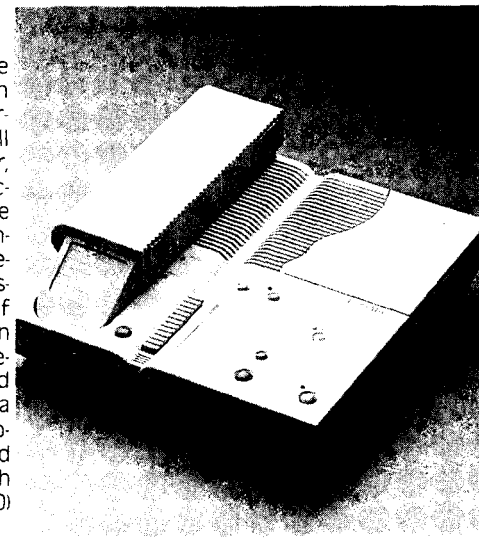

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If Lenny Randall died, there wouldn't be many people at his funeral. He hadn't any family and men like him didn't make friends . . .

LENNY'S SWAN SONG

by IAN STUART

"Did you see Charlie Moss has died, guv'nor?"

I looked up. Don Weller had the slightly self-satisfied expression of a young man who believes he has brought news which will interest his boss.

I wasn't in a mood to humor him. "He wasn't very old," I said.

"Sixty-three."

Only nine years older than me.

Don knew what I was thinking and didn't quite succeed in smothering a grin. "You knew him, didn't you, guv?"

"Yes," I agreed. "I knew him."

It had happened a long time ago, and I hadn't thought much about it lately, but at the time it had been very important to me, and now it all came flooding back.

As far as I was concerned, it started when Bob Stamford came into the squadroom, bringing with him the feel of the day outside, damp and cold. It wasn't actually raining, but you could get almost as wet if you stood about for long. The English call it a Scotch mist, Scots call it a haar.

Bob took off his coat, shook it, spraying moisture over everything within a range of several feet, and hung it on one of the hooks. "Filthy day," he grumbled. None of us made any comment—he was stating the obvious and he wasn't the only one who had been out in it. "Lenny Randall's had an accident, George," he said to me. "He wants to see you."

I was startled. I'd seen the miserable little devil at the Old Bailey yesterday afternoon. "Is he bad?"

Bob sat down. "They don't think he'll live."

If Lenny died, there wouldn't be many people at his funeral. As

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far as I knew, he hadn't any family, and as for friends—men like him didn't make friends.

Lenny was a rat. Even his mother was forced to admit that before she died, worn out with carrying 'round her eighteen-stone body and reviling her departed husband. But he was a rat with a sense of humor. Of sorts.

It wasn't very apparent, not until the end, but it was something. And in Lenny Randall's case, you had to be thankful for small mercies. There weren't any others.

"I'll go and see him," I said. Maybe he had something he wanted to confess.

In those days, Charlie Moss and Frank Thomas were the two leading villains in the Smoke. Their line was robbery. Big-scale stuff—banks, security vans, and that sort of thing. Not vice or drugs, both of which they considered degrading and wouldn't have touched with a bargepole. Crooks like them had their pride. It might not be the sort honest people recognize, but there were crimes they regarded as their legitimate domain and others which were fit only for scum they didn't acknowledge.

Nor did they allow anyone to carry guns on their jobs. You could crack a man's skull open with an iron bar, reducing him to a mental cabbage for the rest of his life, but shooters were dangerous. You never knew who might get hit, and they had a bad image with the public.

London's underworld is fluid. Since the days of the Krays and the Richardsons in the Sixties, allegiances have generally been loose. One, maybe two of the big men will get together a team for a specific job, enrolling the best specialists available, and after it's done the team breaks up. There aren't organized gangs at that level of crime.

Lenny Randall wasn't at that level. He lived on the fringe—a promoter, an intelligence man. Which is funny, because you wouldn't have rated him among the world's great intellects. Not in the first two billion. But he had this one talent, a way of ferreting out big, profitable jobs. And he had contacts. Goodness knows where he acquired them. In jail, most likely. Wherever it was, people came to him with propositions, like a bank with building work going on next door, or a security van that didn't vary its route or its schedule from one month to the next.

He never talked about them, but he had good sources, all right, and you had to hand it to him, Lenny knew his onions. Big-time organizers like Frank Thomas and Charlie Moss wouldn't have

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bought his information otherwise, and both of them did at one time or another. Lenny himself couldn't have organized a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in a temperance hall.

Or so everybody thought. He didn't have that kind of reputation. Come to that, he didn't have much of a reputation at all, except as a moaner.

He had taken chances in the past and got away with them because he hadn't been worth bothering about. Men like Frank and Charlie would take what he had to sell and forget about him. I'd be surprised if either of those two had met him more than a couple of times, he was so inconsiderable. And like the poor devils who work in the diamond mines, what he got for what he produced bore no relation to the return it brought the men who purchased it.

Lenny had enough savvy to understand that, but he hadn't the ability or the finances to change the situation. Which wasn't to say he didn't resent it, he did. And he wouldn't keep quiet about his feelings—he vented them to everybody he could find to listen in the pubs and caffs he frequented.

It was after the big job at the Associated Bank in Southwark he became really vocal. It had been his plan and Charlie Moss had bought it. For half a thou.

That was silly, and Charlie should have known better—he knew what a peevish little runt Lenny was. It was in all the papers that the haul had netted a cool hundred grand. The underworld allowed for journalists' love of round figures and their inability to resist making a good story better and reckoned there had been at least seventy thousand in the strongroom. Which wasn't far out.

I was a D.I. at the time and I worked on the case. And remember, this was before inflation meant you had almost to add noughts to everything. But that was one of Lenny's troubles—everybody undervalued him.

As I say, he had complained before, and at first nobody took much notice. At least it made a change from his moaning about his aches and pains. But then he started shooting off his mouth where it wouldn't do him any good at all. Places like the Happy Huntsman. I mean, everybody knew the old Hunter was where half of Charlie Moss's closest associates hung out. Added to which the landlord was his brother-in-law. Anything said there about Mr. Moss was bound to get back to him before you could say "half a tealeaf," and even Lenny must have known that was something to be avoided. When

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it was the sort of thing *he* was saying, at least. Charlie never minded respect and flattery.

What Lenny said was that Charlie was a mean, lousy bastard who took the living out of honest blokes' mouths. There was a lot more than that, but the rest wasn't repeatable. Particularly not to Mrs. Moss's eldest son. And somebody did repeat it. All of it. With embellishments.

Charlie listened and waited. If you didn't know him, you'd have thought he hadn't heard, or even that he was prepared to overlook Lenny's piece of *lese majeste*. We who knew him waited, too. We didn't want an underworld killing on our manor, but apart from a word of warning in the right places there wasn't much we could do.

We waited a long time, and while we did Lenny came up with another bright scheme for a job at a factory in Hertfordshire not very security-minded and easily placed for the motorway. A heist there and you could be back in the Smoke and gone to ground in three-quarters of an hour.

This time he didn't take his idea to Charlie. Even Lenny wasn't that big a fool, and I reckon he'd scared himself shooting his mouth off the way he had. He put it up to Frank Thomas. Big Frank pulled it on a payday, made eighty thousand clear, and paid Lenny seven hundred and fifty. We heard afterward that he'd said he didn't want people saying he paid less than Charlie. He always was a humorous beggar, Frank.

Lenny nearly climbed the walls. He might possess a sense of humor, although we didn't know it then, but he didn't appreciate jokes like that. He was so peeved that he started to bad-mouth Frank along with Charlie.

By this time, Lenny had stored up so much animosity in both quarters that when retribution finally caught up with him he didn't know who had put the boot in, Frank or Charlie. But he knew it was one of them. He could feel it in his water, he said.

Maybe they fixed it between them. They weren't what you would call blood brothers, far from it, but they both knew that a war between them would mean nothing but trouble and the only winners would be the law. So they practiced coexistence. They never passed on information about jobs they were planning and generally they used different men for their jobs, but they had their lines of communication. If Charlie let Frank know that he was going to deal with Lenny, Frank wouldn't have got in his way, and vice versa.

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Lenny had to be taught a lesson, for the sake of discipline if nothing else.

It was strictly a private matter, and Charlie (or Frank) didn't want the law taking an interest. That ruled out physical retribution severe enough to make the punishment fit the crime. Frank (or Charlie) didn't want him to get over his punishment too quickly. If at all. Personally, I would have put my money on Charlie—he'd had longer to plan his revenge and what happened was more his style—but a lot of people reckoned it was Frank. You paid your money and you took your choice.

It doesn't take much in the way of brains or ability to frame a friendless no-account little crook like Lenny and, whichever it was, they framed him good and well. He got four years for conspiracy to rob a factory in Wandsworth, and it must have been the first time in his life he wasn't guilty of what he was charged with.

Lenny knew how to make life as easy for himself as he could inside—after all, he'd had plenty of practice—but this time his bitterness at the injustice of it all festered inside him and he started thinking in a way he'd never thought before. One last job, that was what he needed. Something really special.

By the time the prison gate closed behind him, he had his plan mapped out. This would be his crowning achievement, his swan song. After it, he could retire.

The next few weeks he spent putting his package together. The biggest problem was finding the right tickle. It had to be big, really big, but without too much risk, and he was growing desperate when he found what he wanted. Strictly speaking, he didn't find it—it came from one of his contacts, a man in a security company, and it cost him two grand, one down and one when the job had been pulled.

"It" was a bank in a quiet suburban road which every Monday morning took in large amounts of cash from two big supermarkets, a garage, and a bus station. The money was all there by midday and sometime between one forty-five and two o'clock a van from the security company came to transport it to the bank's cash center.

Lenny checked out the proposition with even more care than usual, and when he had finished he almost rubbed his hands with glee. It couldn't be better. The bank was in a middle-class residential area and the staff weren't security conscious: the only crime they ever saw 'round there was nicking cars and the occasional housebreaking. There were double yellow lines for some distance in each direction

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outside the bank and the road was both wide and quiet, which meant there was almost no risk of a getaway car being trapped in traffic.

Lenny planned every detail, even managing to produce a sketch plan of the bank and the area 'round it. When he had finished, he got in touch with Bert Shanks, who was Charlie's right-hand man, and told him he wanted to see Charlie.

Bert nearly ruptured himself laughing. It was difficult to believe that even Lenny was incapable of understanding that it was either Charlie or Frank Thomas who had framed him, but apparently he didn't.

"'E won't see you," he said contemptuously. "You've 'ad it. You're dead."

"I've got the biggest job lined up 'e's ever seen," Lenny told him. "It's dead easy. Three 'undred grand."

Bert laughed derisively. Then it occurred to him that if he sent Lenny away and there was something in his claim, and Lenny took his idea to Frank Thomas and Frank made a killing, Charlie wouldn't be exactly pleased. Not to put too fine a point on it, he'd go bloody bananas.

"Three 'undred thahsand nicker," Lenny repeated persuasively. "I've got it all worked out."

As I said, all this was some years ago, and in those days three hundred thousand pounds wasn't a tidy sum, it was a fortune.

"I'll see," Bert said carelessly. It would have been beneath his dignity to show more interest than that.

"I'll be 'ere at six tomorrow," Lenny told him, laying it on thick. "'E's got till then."

'Ere was a squalid cafe in New Cross.

Lenny was no psychologist, but when you lead his sort of life you learn a lot about people's worst instincts and he reckoned that Charlie would bite for three reasons. First, greed. Second, pride—it was a prestige job and he wouldn't fancy turning it down only to have Frank Thomas take it on. And, third, curiosity.

He was right. Charlie laughed like a drain, swore for two minutes straight off, and finally said, "Okay, why not? Let's talk to 'im."

At one minute to six the next day, Bert was back in the cafe. "Charlie says okay, 'e'll listen. 'E'll see you now."

They went out to Bert's car, one of those big flashy jobs, all lumps and lights, the Americans made in those days and London wide boys loved cutting a dash in. Bert's was bright pink and cream with a lot of chromium plate. He drove Lenny out to Charlie's place, a big

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detached house in Chingford. Charlie was an East Ender through and through, and, while now he was successful he wanted all the trappings, he couldn't bring himself to move far from his native heath. Also, from Chingford he could keep a watchful eye on his patch.

All things considered, it was an amicable meeting. Charlie poured Lenny a large Scotch and one for himself and they got down to business straightaway. Lenny Randall wasn't the sort of person Charlie was accustomed to welcoming into his home these days and the sooner he was gone the better.

"Why come to me?" he demanded.

"I'm on the way out, Mr. Moss," Lenny told him, looking suitably pathetic. "While I was inside, the quack told me I 'adn't got more than a year, and I've 'ad nearly three months of it. I want to go out in a blaze of glory like. I've set me 'eart on it. You might say it's always bin me ambition. And it'd be nice to 'ave a bit of comfort the last few months."

"I'm sorry about that, Lenny," Charlie said, looking as if he couldn't have cared less. Which, probably, he couldn't. "Okay, what's the job?"

Lenny explained. "I've got a map 'ere," he said when he had finished.

They studied it together.

"You 'ave a car ready 'alf a mile away in Church Road and park the van 'ere in Parfitt Street at twenty to two on the dot," Lenny said. "It'll be quiet as the grave rahnd there then, 'alf the bank staff'll be at dinner and the shops'll be closed, most of 'em. I tell you, Mr. Moss, they die between one and two rahnd there, straight.

"You'll see the security van go past the end of the street and you follow it. There'll be three blokes in it. They've bin doin' that run for years and they don't keep much of an eye aht now. Taking 'em'll be easy as kissin' a baby. Three minutes and you'll be away."

Charlie was impressed, but he didn't show it. To have done so would have given Lenny a false impression of his standing and would have been bad tactics. When you're as big as Charlie you can't afford to let anything impress you. But privately he was impressed and surprised—he hadn't thought Lenny had it in him to plan a job so thoroughly.

"I might look at it," he conceded, his tone suitably offhand.

Lenny knew he was hooked and relief surged through him.

"There's one thing, Mr. Moss," he said, his tone more deferential

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than ever. "I 'ave to choose the team." This was the trickiest part. Charlie would find it hard to accept that condition—maybe impossible. "You don't 'ave to worry, they'll all be blokes you've used before," he added in his most wheedling tone.

Charlie stared at him. He couldn't believe it. Then he swore fluently for at least a minute.

"Just 'umor me, Mr. Moss," Lenny pleaded. "I want this one to be my big job. Sort of my memorial—people will remember me by it. That's why I want to pick the team. There won't be anyone you don't know. Honest."

Charlie eyed him. And in the end pride and greed won. After all, what harm could Lenny do him? The idea was ridiculous. So he agreed, subject to his having the power of veto over anybody he didn't fancy for the job.

That suited Lenny. "My cut's to be twelve thahsand," he said. "I 'ad to pay my source three and an 'alf. And I've got to say the day—when 'e tells me it's on."

Charlie considered those last two conditions. If the job was really worth three hundred grand, twelve was cheap for all Lenny had done. He was surprised he hadn't wanted at least twenty. Mr. Moss might not trust anybody as far as he could throw them on a wet Sunday morning, but he was satisfied that Lenny wouldn't risk trying to put one over on him. The little toad wouldn't dare, even if he *was* dying.

"All right," he agreed.

Lenny was delighted. Now he could go ahead with stage two.

He had already decided on the men he wanted to use, men he knew would keep their mouths shut, and over the next three days he made more phone calls and talked to a lot of people. He knew he had to move fast. He might have chosen carefully, but the underworld had more leaks than Whitehall and the job had to be pulled before word got around. Which wouldn't take long in the small world he inhabited. As he put it, once the bleeding cat was out of the bloody bag the fat would be well and truly in the flaming fire.

About five o'clock on the Sunday night nine days after his meeting with Charlie Moss, he made two final phone calls. That done, he metaphorically sat back and relaxed. Only he couldn't really relax. Tomorrow was the big day and he was as nervous as a kitten.

Parfitt Street was an unremarkable thoroughfare lined with identical semi-detached houses. The next afternoon at one-forty exactly,

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a shabby dark-blue Ford Transit van stolen three days before and bearing false plates turned into it and drove at a steady twenty-five miles an hour toward the junction with Clarence Road at the other end. Thirty yards from the corner, it stopped. There was no one in sight—the inhabitants of Parfitt Street were at work or their lunch.

During the next seven minutes, two cars drove down the road and an elderly woman walked past, leading a scottie on a lead. None of the seven men in the van spoke.

At twelve minutes to two, a maroon-and-white van passed the end of the road.

"That's it!" one of the men exclaimed.

Charlie Moss realized that until now he hadn't been quite convinced that Lenny's plan was on the up-and-up. The sight of the security van satisfied him.

The men with him were too experienced to ask if they shouldn't follow it straightaway. They knew you had to allow time for the bank's cashiers to fetch the cash from their strongroom and the security guards to carry it out to their van before you moved in.

Nerves became stretched as the seconds passed and became minutes. One. Two. Three. Four.

"Now!" Charlie barked.

The driver let in his clutch.

Round the corner in Clarence Road all was quiet. The red-and-white van was parked by the curb outside the bank, a man in uniform and a crash helmet standing beside it. He didn't take much notice when the Transit pulled up a few yards away—he was watching two of his colleagues carrying four canvas sacks out from the bank.

"Right!" Charlie said.

The rear doors of the Transit were thrown open and the six men in the back piled out, pickaxe handles at the ready. While two of them headed for the guard by the van, the others went for the ones with the sacks.

From his vantage point overlooking the bank, Lenny had watched the Transit arrive. Lifting his radio to his lips, he said one word: "Right!"

Frank Thomas, sitting in the first of two cars parked 'round a corner a hundred yards away, echoed him. "Right."

The cars shot forward, rounded the corner fast, and screeched to a stop in front of the security company's van. The doors opened and six men hurtled out, each of them armed with a pickaxe handle or an iron bar.

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It was a second or two before they took in what was happening and they stared at the scene before them. Then they remembered all the money in those sacks and they charged forward. All hell was let loose. What with Charlie Moss's men attacking the security guards and Frank Thomas's men at the same time, and Frank Thomas's gang laying into the guards and Charlie's lot, it was bedlam.

To add to the pandemonium, seconds later a dozen police vehicles appeared from 'round other corners. While some of them sealed off all the turnings off Clarence Road, the others disgorged a force which was not only larger than the two gangs combined but quite prepared to mix it with them, and they proceeded to do just that.

Charlie regarded them with loathing. "Lenny Randall!" he breathed. "I'll kill 'im!"

"Randall!" Frank Thomas roared. "I'll murder the little sod!"

Lenny's infamy appalled them both.

The air was filled with the sounds of wood and iron on flesh and men grunting and swearing. People came to doors and windows to watch. Clarence Road hadn't seen drama like it since a land mine demolished a dozen houses during the blitz.

One of Frank's drivers had seen enough. He let in his clutch and tore off down the road, only to skid and crash at a roadblock a couple of hundred yards away. Charlie and Frank hesitated a moment longer, then they, too, made a run for it.

Straight into the waiting arms of the Law. I got Frank.

When it was all over, three crooks, one security guard, and two policemen were draped about the pavement, none of them seriously injured, and the rest of the robbers were nursing their bruises in police vans.

It didn't take long for the hopelessness of their position to dawn on them. When it did, three—one of Frank's team and two of Charlie's—decided that three years off a probable eight or ten stretch was worth the risk and grassed about so many other jobs that it took an hour just to write out the charges.

The trial at the Old Bailey lasted a week, and at the end of it Charlie and Frank got eighteen years apiece. Lenny attended the last day. He hadn't been charged with anything.

Neither of the villains said anything when they were sentenced, but they looked at Lenny and he saw the expression in their eyes. In other circumstances it would have scared the daylights out of

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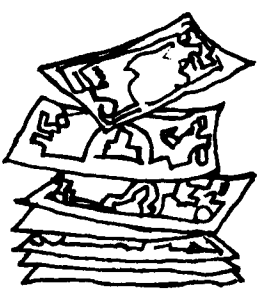
him, but he was having a glorious revenge and we were providing him with a new identity. With the reward money, he would be able to move away from the Smoke and buy a little business somewhere. After all, he expected to live a long time.

It never occurred to us he'd set up the Clarence Road job. He wasn't green enough to tell us and risk the case collapsing and if anyone had suggested it we'd have laughed at them. Lenny hadn't the brains. He'd never have been able to con Frank and Charlie, not in a month of Sundays. All we knew was that he'd tipped us off that the security van was going to be done that day and a big team was involved.

Until I saw him in hospital. Then he told me the whole story, finishing with how last night he'd gone out to celebrate, got drunk, and staggered off the pavement almost under the wheels of a van. It was just coincidence it was a blue Ford Transit.



DETECTIVERSE

UPWARD MOB-ILITY

by SEYMOUR KAPETANSKY

A crook aiming for the big time
In society's making his climb—
He launders his dollars
Through men with white collars,
Cleaning up in that high-class-type crime.

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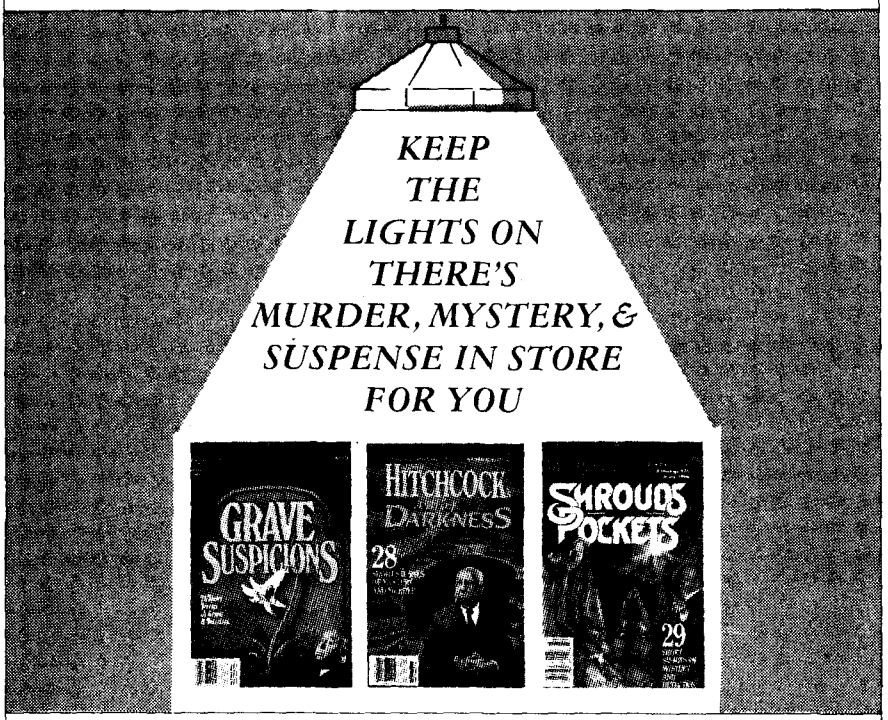

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Thomas Flanagan's first novel was The Year of the French, *his most recent* Tenants of Time. *"The Cold Winds of Adesta," 1951 winner of the Ellery Queen Contest which ran from 1945–1956, then (after a five-year hiatus) in 1961, introduced Major Tennente, a professional soldier who is also a professional policeman.*

The author told Ellery Queen that he first saw Tennente in such things as a trivial gesture, a limp, a turn of phrase, but finally saw him as a way of thinking in a particular landscape in the world of 1951.

Incidentally, human (editor) error confused the chronology of contest winners in the February and March issues. "The President of the United States, Detective," by H. F. Heard (February) was first-prize winner in 1946 (not 1947) and "Justice Has No Number" by Alfredo Segre (March) was first-prize winner in 1947 (not 1948). Due to the forgiving nature of our readers, we've received no letters of complaint about this yet, but do want to set the record straight . . .

THE COLD WINDS OF ADESTA

by THOMAS FLANAGAN

"There are the headlights," the young lieutenant said. "He's coming." The lieutenant, in his fur-collared greatcoat, was standing by the dirt-streaked window, looking across the pass.

"How long does the trip take?" Major Tennente asked.

"It's five minutes from the border of the Republic and he's under observation all that time. We can watch his lights."

Tennente drew a thin, twisted cigar from his pocket and lit it. The wind hurled itself against the hut, shaking the single window. He looked up from the chair in which he was sitting, and in the light

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of the flickering gasoline lamp he seemed old to the lieutenant. The yellow light caught his hollowed-out cheeks and his thin hooked nose but left his eyes in shadow.

"Is it always like this here?" he asked.

"This is a bad night and the bad season," Lieutenant Bonares said. "It's the wind cutting down the pass between the mountains. They speak of the cold winds of Adesta."

Tennente did not reply. He held the cigar between his teeth, his hands thrust deep into his pockets. He watched the young lieutenant at the window place his hand nervously on his automatic, then drop it to his side. A whistle blew shrilly.

"He's passed the roadblock," Bonares said. "The men outside will stop him now."

When the lieutenant had left the hut, Tennente stood up, a thin bent man, and, limping slightly, walked to the window. The heavy, closed truck had been halted before the hut, and by the light of the full moon Tennente could see Bonares speaking to the driver, who was gesturing angrily. Bonares turned to the two slouching troopers and they walked toward the truck. The driver climbed down and went with Bonares to the hut.

He knows his work, that young man, Tennente thought. He continued to stare out the window when he heard the door open behind him. The moon illuminated the mountainsides and the winding road between them, and he could see, far off, the lighted windows of the republic frontier post across the border. Then he turned.

The driver was a soft fleshy man, incongruously dressed in cap and windbreaker. There was a dead cigarette in the corner of his strangely thin mouth, which gave him a puckish, age-denying quality.

"This is Gomar," the lieutenant said. "We're old friends by now, aren't we, Gomar?"

Gomar smiled amusedly at Tennente, whom he had been watching through half closed eyes, and shrugged.

"You transport wines?" Tennente asked.

"Anything but wines. Ask the lieutenant here. I carry guns, drugs, women. Whatever you say, I carry."

"He brings wine from the Republic," Bonares said.

Tennente stepped away from the window and walked across the loose planking to the center of the room. His eyes, the eyes of a tired, watchful hawk, were no longer in shadow. "Listen to me, Gomar.

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I will give you a wise thought. When I speak to you, answer me properly. Answer me clearly and plainly."

"Yes," Gomar said. "I transport wine."

"We produce much wine in this country," Tennente said. He removed the cigar from his strong, discolored teeth. "You can't make money by bringing more in."

"That's my affair. If I don't use this pass, I'll use one far to the south. If you close all the passes to me, I'll ship by boat and then go bankrupt. That is your affair."

"Yes," Tennente said, "it is. But the pass of Adesta is almost never used. Why did you choose it?"

Gomar shrugged. "It was convenient. I carry wine from the Republic. I am licensed in both countries. It's my own concern what pass I use."

"How did you manage to get an importing license?"

"I bribed an official in the capital."

The lieutenant walked toward him stiffly, but Gomar reached in his pocket for a box of matches and relit his cigarette.

Tennente chuckled appreciatively. "You are an unusual merchant, Gomar. How is it that you drive your own truck?"

"Perhaps it's because my profits are small. Perhaps it's because I like the night air." Gomar drew in on his cigarette. "And I'm tired of questions. My truck is open for inspection."

Tennente looked at him a moment, then said, "Thank you." He jerked his head and the others followed him outside. The wind thrust him back against the door for a moment, but he shook off Bonares' hand. "Show me how you search," he said.

At Bonares' order, the troopers opened the truck and removed the casks, placing them on the hard, snow-covered ground in front of the headlights. They shook each cask. They went over the truck carefully. Bonares had trained them well, or perhaps they were particularly zealous in the presence of an official from the capital. Then they stood before the major, working their numb, cold-clumsy fingers.

"Open one of the casks," Tennente said.

"That isn't necessary," Gomar said in sudden anger. "You can tell what is in a cask by shaking it. At least, you can tell whether it's wine or guns."

"Why do you think we're looking for guns?" Tennente asked.

"Because I'm not a fool. Only gunrunning would bring a major of police to the pass of Adesta in winter."

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"Open a cask," Tennente said to the soldiers.

"I am not sure we have orders for that," Bonares said. "You must take the responsibility, Major."

Tennente reached out suddenly and drew the lieutenant's automatic from its holster, flicked off the safety catch, and emptied the gun into one of the casks. The wine ran blood-red on the snow. He handed the gun, butt first, to Bonares, who received it in stunned admiration.

"That wine cost me a great deal of money," Gomar said evenly. "You are a violent man, Major—"

"Tennente."

He saw Gomar's eyes widen imperceptibly. "I understand your violence now, Major. You have that reputation."

Tennente threw down his cigar. "I am not violent, but my temper is short. When you return to town, file a report. It will be buried with a pile of other complaints." He turned to the soldiers, who had been watching him with quiet, frightened eyes. "Load his truck carefully. Wine should not be mistreated."

Tennente watched them, and then watched Gomar's truck begin to move down the twisting, dangerous road toward the lights of the town of Adesta. Then he walked back into the hut, with the lieutenant following him.

Tennente stood wordlessly at the window while Bonares heated coffee on the alcohol stove. When Bonares brought the coffee to him, he wrapped his hands gratefully about the hot white cup and held it without drinking.

"How often does he make the trip?" Tennente asked.

"Every night."

"So? For wine, every night. And how long has he been doing this?"

"He began two weeks ago."

"Where does he go now?"

"There's only one place to go—the town of Adesta. And he does not stop on the road. They have watched his lights. From the terrace of the hotel you can see the road clear up to the hut here." Bonares hesitated, then said, "It is guns we're looking for, isn't it?"

Tennente looked at him. The lieutenant was a slim man and very young. His eyes were clear and dark against his olive skin. "Yes," Tennente said. "It is guns."

"It does not seem possible," Bonares said. "But of course in the capital they understand these things better."

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"Why does it not seem possible, Lieutenant?" Tennente asked. He lifted the white cup to his lips and drank from it.

Bonares looked at him perplexedly. "Because we would find them when we search. Unless, of course, Gomar is a ghost."

Tennente turned away from the window and walked to the table where he set down the coffee cup gently. "No, Gomar is not a ghost. But in a sense the guns are. They are dead men's guns."

Bonares began to question him, then changed his mind. Finally he asked, "You know how he does it?"

Tennente shook his head. "You can phone to the town for my car, Lieutenant."

The young man hesitated again, then spoke. "Major?"

"Yes?"

"If I can be of help to you while you are here, will you use me?"

"Why are you so anxious to be of use?"

Bonares smiled with engaging candor. "I am a junior lieutenant on a border post. If I am able to help you, in twenty years I may be a senior lieutenant. Why do you ask?"

"In this country everyone is patriotic for a reason," Tennente said. "I like to collect those reasons. It is a hobby of mine. Phone now, Lieutenant."

Colonel Jarel felt that he had reason to be troubled, for Tennente was a troublesome person. Tennente was a rash man and an insolent one. It was said that he was insolent even to the General.

From his office window Jarel could see Tennente crossing the square toward him. The major was carrying the canvas-wrapped package which he had brought with him yesterday, when he first came to Adesta. The colonel, who knew what the package contained, shuddered slightly. The sun still fell in a golden wash on the white buildings and suffused the plaza, and the armed and solitary patrol still moved untroubled among the villagers. But Jarel had only to look again at the hungry, predatory figure approaching his office to lose once more his lightly held ease.

The major had not shaved and his uniform was unpressed; cigars bulged from his tunic pocket and his garrison cap was pushed back from the high creased forehead. That is how officers looked before the days of the General, Jarel thought. Tennente limped into the room, put the bundle on the desk, and then sat down. The colonel turned away from the window and looked at him. "You saw Gomar last night?" the colonel asked.

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"I saw Gomar. I saw his wine."

"But no guns?"

Tennente shook his head. "No, no guns."

"Because he carries no guns," Jarel said. "Because there are no guns. Not in this region."

"Gomar drives his truck up the pass and into the Republic. When he comes back, he carries guns as well as wine."

Jarel groaned to himself: all that business of yesterday over again, and even after Tennente had made his own inspection. "How?" he asked with constrained politeness.

"I don't know that. Yet."

Jarel walked to the desk and sat behind it facing Tennente, hating the major's drawn, tired face, the watchful eyes. "You have checked the truck. I have checked the truck. Bonares has checked it. The casks are examined. The truck itself is examined. There is only wine."

"Guns come down from the pass," Tennente said, with his maddening, calm indifference. "It is my job to discover how it is done. Your disbelief does not interest me."

You must match this man's calm, Jarel told himself. Tennente is a dangerous man. "It is the disbelief of the commandant of the town of Adesta, Major. It is my duty to see that the public welfare is maintained in this region. I would hardly be so remiss in that duty as to allow a man to enter the country once a night in a truck filled with contraband arms."

Tennente shrugged, and the shrug seemed to imply many things, all of them unflattering. Jarel felt anger working in his mind like a strong liquor. Tennente placed his hand on the canvas bundle which yesterday he had opened for the colonel. "This is one of the guns. Last week the police shot the man who carried it. But there will be many guns, and many men carrying them, unless Gomar is shot."

"Shot," Jarel echoed, but not incredulously; like Gomar, he knew the major by reputation. "You can't shoot a man for transporting wine under license."

"Gomar is not a wine merchant. He is a gunrunner, and that is a capital offense."

Jarel pushed back his chair, stood up, and walked to the wall map. He put a short plump finger on the town of Adesta and then, by stretching himself, placed the other arm across the border into the Republic. "This is Gomar's route," he said. "He is first searched by

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the border guards of the Republic, and then, with his truck visible at all times to Bonares, he moves down the mountain road to our hut. There he is searched a second time. Then he continues down into the town, always under the eyes of Bonares and anyone in the valley who cares to look up toward the mountains."

"Young Bonares," Tennente interrupted. "Do you trust him?"

"I trust him," Jarel said. "He is a bright lad. But I trust no one that much. I have made surprise checks. You have made one yourself. For that matter, the Republic guards have offered to let us assist them in their search."

"Yes," Tennente said. "If we give them sufficient warning."

Jarel, ignoring the major's qualification, turned away from the map. "You must see my position, Major. I have the greatest respect for the secret police, but I will not arrest a man without evidence."

Tennente stroked the shrouded rifle. "Here is your evidence, Colonel. It could only have come from this region. And only Gomar has used the pass."

"You believe the story of the arms cache," Jarel said. "An old wives' tale fifteen years old. A story told in cafes by idlers."

"It is not merely a cafe story. It is a fact of history. The gun cache exists, and in the mountains of Adesta." Tennente's eyes were veiled by their heavy hoods. "In the final days of the General's revolution—"

"War of liberation," Jarel corrected him automatically.

"Thank you. War of liberation. A Government army, the only one to remain intact, moved to this region and crossed to the Republic. They were turned back, and so they returned to this region and into the power of the General. But they returned without their arms. Their arms were buried, either on this side of the pass or the other. And now Gomar has found a way of removing them." Tennente threw the rifle onto the desk. "Do you think I cannot recognize those arms, Colonel?"

"You should be able to," Jarel said. "You were in one of the armies which fought the General."

"Just so," Tennente said courteously. Jarel had noticed that Tennente's infamous temper was his servant; it exploded only when he chose. "And this gun came from the mountains of Adesta."

"Then the guns come either from our side or from the Republic side. If from the Republic side, then Gomar must carry them past the Republic border patrol."

"That might not be difficult to do."

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"And then he would have to get them past our guards, and that *is* difficult to do." Jarel stood with his back against the map. There was no reason why he should hold his temper; Tennente was hardly a man in political favor.

"Perhaps they come from our side," Tennente said.

Jarel tugged at the map cord, and the mountains of Adesta shot upward and vanished. "Really, Major Tennente. I am not as ignorant of the details of my command as you suggest." He walked to a steel filing cabinet, rummaged through its disorder, and pulled out a wrinkled document. "I have read the report of the military commission, and I presume that you have as well. Immediately after the revolution—"

"The war of liberation," Tennente said, his face bland.

"—the General sent a commission here. They built a border hut and then searched our side of the border." Jarel untied the red tape, opened the dossier, and extracted a map. It was similar to the one which Tennente had just seen disappear, save in one detail. Jarel placed his short blunt finger on the border post. "Here is the hut they built," he said, "and here is how they searched. Inch by inch. Do you see these circles in red ink? Each circle represents a stage of search. They would have found a single pistol, had it been buried there."

Jarel looked up at Tennente, who had been following him closely. "And now, if the guns exist at all, they are carried down the mountain in a truck which contains only wine. Does that make sense to you?"

"No, but it does not have to make sense, because it happens. You are like the mathematician who confronts the runner at the end of his race and proves to him that he could not have run as fast as he did." Tennente picked up the map, folded it, and slipped it in his tunic pocket.

"Major Tennente—"

"Colonel Jarel." Tennente stood up stiffly. "I did not come here to discuss the niceties of logical demonstration with you."

"Nevertheless, you will have a demonstration. Would you like to have Gomar arrested when he reaches the town tonight?"

"By no means. I am not interested in one load of arms. I am interested in discovering his source of supply and his means of transportation. And then, too, it might develop that tonight he will not be carrying arms."

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Jarel walked up to him. "And why not, Major? Because he will be warned—is that what you mean?"

"I mean only that I will tell you when he is to be arrested and shot. Only that."

"And when that time comes, and if you are mistaken, I will press for a court-martial. I am not a man without friends."

"And I am a man without friends," Tennente said, "in your government." He pushed back his garrison cap and looked at Jarel. "You will not arrest without evidence, Colonel. That is rare in the General's country. I like that." He picked up the rifle, raised his hand in a sketchy parody of the General's salute, and left the room.

From the window, Jarel watched as Tennente walked painfully to his staff car, across the plaza. There is a man one could follow, he thought, and then corrected himself. There is a man one could have followed. Perhaps twenty years ago. Before Jarel's wife had given birth to the two daughters who were now in a convent school at the capital. Before Jarel's body had run to fat and his mind to caution. He looked at a photograph of the General which hung on the opposite wall. Like himself, a plump man. A man who knew how to be safe, how to twist and turn.

"You see," Lieutenant Bonares said, "on a clear afternoon like this you can see the frontier post of the Republic clearly, and the people moving there in front of it. We could wave to each other if we wanted to, but we never do."

"No," Tennente said, as he stood beside the young man outside the border hut, "I can see that." He looked upward. "It will snow."

"It often does up here, although it always remains warm in the town below. Here it is always quiet."

"Myself, I like it."

"I am not your age, sir."

"No. That is so. It will take you many years to learn that life like this can be pleasant, or at least not ugly."

"In the cities," Bonares said, "there it is always pleasant, and promotions come quickly. One could be a colonel at forty, one could—" He caught his tongue and flushed through his olive skin at his bad manners.

"It's all right," Tennente said. "I have been a colonel. And once I was almost a general. When I was young I would not have liked this place. When I was young I was a fool." He walked over to his staff car and his sergeant handed him a canvas-wrapped bundle.

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While the two border troopers outside the hut looked at the bundle with idle, bored curiosity, Tennente and the lieutenant went into the hut.

Tennente unwrapped the rifle and placed it on the table near the unwashed coffee cups of the morning.

"You asked if Gomar were smuggling guns," Tennente said. "He is. This is one of them. Pick it up. Examine it."

Bonares looked at it with a vague, professional interest and then replaced it.

Tennente slipped into a chair. "You have never seen a gun like it?"

Bonares shook his head.

"No," Tennente said. "That is because you were too young. This model is no longer used in the Army, and it is not a good gun, perhaps, because it lost a war."

"Major," Bonares said. "I have told you what I know, and I will help you if I can."

"Yes," Tennente said. His voice was even, but there was a tired edge to it. "I understand that. Perhaps I have come up here so that you can tell me what you do not know. The route is clear. You know it, and Jarel knows it, and I know it. But something happens on that route which only Gomar knows."

He reached in his pocket, pulled out the map, and unfolded it on the table, beside the rifle. Then he motioned to the lieutenant to sit beside him. He scratched the stubble on his chin. "I wish that I were the kind of officer your colonel is—all logic and crisp argument. When I was at the Academy I was always poor at that. If I were such an officer I could say, 'Don't you see, my dear Colonel, it was done thus-and-so'—telling him exactly how. But instead I know only that it was done."

Bonares shook his head. "I wish I could tell you."

"The map and the rifle," Tennente said. "Logic and violence. What those two cannot do when they are joined! Together they can make a revolution."

"A trickle of guns will not make a revolution," Bonares said self-consciously. He had been taught that politics are not a soldier's concern.

"In the country which the General rules?" Tennente asked. "There were enough guns in that arms cache for a regiment. A gun will never stay buried, Lieutenant—never."

"He brings no guns to this post, Major. I swear it!"

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Tennente ran his hand along the dull barrel of the rifle, and now the voice which spoke to the young officer was more quiet. "Once I wished that there were more of these weapons—in the days before this gun was buried, when the General's artillery was rolling across the plains, when towns which contained not a single soldier were bombed and destroyed. You don't remember those days, Lieutenant. You were a little boy in school."

"I have heard the story."

"How proud we were then of the Army of Adesta. The Army which buried their arms rather than surrender them." He smiled. "And how pleased we were when the report of the commission made it clear that the arms were out of the reach of the General."

"If one feels as you do," Bonares said, "why are you not still proud?"

Tennente looked at Bonares, who, frightened by his rudeness, dropped his eyes to the map. "Because I have come to hate violence and those who make use of it. I was proud that those guns could be used again. But not by Gomar." Tennente pushed back his chair and stood up. "Not by Gomar. I am not proud that the guns of my old Army should be used to destroy my own country." He leaned forward. "Right in this pass, Lieutenant, our country is being betrayed."

"In this pass," Bonares said, his young clear eyes troubled. "I had not thought of it that way."

"And that is why I cannot use the fine logic of your colonel, who shows me circles on maps. Because the one man I hate even more than the General is carrying guns here. And I am going to stop him."

Bonares' hands were pressed so hard against the table that the tips of his fingers were white. "I would help you if I could, Major."

"Though why I should stop this Gomar I do not know," Tennente said. "Nor for whom. For a fat General whose chief virtue is that he is only a little bit better than a totalitarian government? For a fat colonel who is afraid of a bad report? For a lieutenant who wants a pleasant post in the capital?" He walked to the window. "Perhaps I will stop him for the honor of an Army whose members are scattered or dead and all betrayed."

It was beginning to snow, and the first flakes were falling slowly and noiselessly. "It must have been snowing that day," he said. "That day fifteen years ago. Over the pass an Army moved up and then moved back. An Army defeated, and honeycombed by men like Gomar. Now where is your logic, Lieutenant? That quality which

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Colonel Jarel values so highly. Tell me what you do not know." He glanced momentarily at Bonares, whose eyes were fixed on the map.

"Logic is always helpful," Bonares said sententiously, without raising his eyes. "And ultimately it is always correct."

"Then how does he carry through his guns?" Tennente asked.

"How can I tell you what I do not know?" Bonares said, and then looked up. "I can tell you only that he does not carry guns to this post."

"Yet logic is always correct," Tennente said. "Ultimately." He turned back to the window, and for an instant he saw imprinted on the retina of his imagination the long weary columns of men moving backward, down the long steep road to the General's tribunals and concentration camps, and he felt that if he could sharpen the focus of his vision he would be able to see whether or not they still carried their arms. For Tennente knew that guns will not stay buried, nor violence stay hidden in the earth. He tried to look backward, fifteen years, to the clue which the present did not hold.

The snow was falling more swiftly now, and as it did so it wiped from Tennente's mind the picture which his tired imagination had conjured up. And in place of that picture was an idea, an implausible, improbable idea. An idea which was against all Jarel's logic, but which was really the only logical answer.

He turned. "Lieutenant, do you still wish to be of service to me?"

"In anything, Major."

"After you have searched Gomar's truck tonight, phone me. I will be at the hotel."

"Of course," Bonares said.

"I want to time him, to see how long it takes him to reach the town." He walked to the door. "If he comes tonight. It is snowing hard."

"He always comes," Bonares said bitterly.

In the years before the First World War an attempt was made to establish Adesta as a resort town. They built a large hotel at the edge of the town, fronting the valley, a hotel with a fine long marbled terrace from which one could look across the brief valley at the mountains. Here, for a few years, ladies from the capital sat with their parasols, sipping ices while the gentlemen strolled up and down, pretending that Adesta was Biarritz or Sorrento or Zurich. They would drive into Adesta in their open touring cars, swathed in dustcoats and mufflers, and stay for weeks.

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In those days, the neighboring Republic was a friendly land and there were no frontier guards. The visitors, on windless days, would drive up the narrow twisting road and over the pass for picnics on the green warm meadows and then drive back in the cool evening for dancing on the terrace of the hotel. But the cold winds drove them away and the manager went bankrupt and sold the hotel to a native innkeeper. Now it was visibly decaying.

There were few servants now, and the pink stucco walls were unwashed. The expensive walnut bar had been replaced by one of zinc, about which the wine growers and farmers would gather in the evening, discussing prices and the strange things which happened in the city.

One wing of the hotel had been destroyed by artillery fire during the revolution and had not been replaced. The marble of the long terrace, which had once been the pride of its owner, was cracked and dirty now, and the tiny tables were unwashed.

It was late in the evening when Colonel Jarel joined Tennente on the terrace, although the major had been sitting there since twilight. Jarel sank into the tiny wicker chair beside Tennente. "There is a roadblock at the foot of the mountain now. Gomar will be stopped when he reaches it. It is all arranged precisely as you suggested."

Tennente nodded. He was smoking, and the tiny glow of his cigar outlined the long creased face.

"You may be right," Jarel said placatingly. "We will find out. It would be much to our credit if you were right."

"It does not matter," Tennente said.

"It matters. Of course it matters—if guns are being supplied."

"Here, there, everywhere. —Did you ever have rats in your house, Jarel? You find their hole, plug it up with cement, and sit back. You see no more rats. But they are there, moving delicately behind the woodwork, sounding out the weakness of the wood. They find a section which has been badly joined and they begin to gnaw. And soon there is another hole and you have to plug that one up."

"But you simply keep on plugging up the holes," Jarel said.

"Oh, yes. Unless you build strongly, with good wood."

A wind was beginning to rise, and now it blew gently across the terrace. Jarel, as he watched Tennente's motionless figure, shivered slightly. It is the wind, he thought.

"I can get into a great deal of trouble for what I'm doing," Jarel said, "and I have always avoided trouble. But now I'm not afraid."

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"You will be," Tennente said. "Fear is in this country like malaria in a swamp."

"What are you afraid of?" Jarel asked.

Tennente pointed with his cigar. "There are Gomar's lights," he said. "He is coming to Bonares' hut."

I am afraid of nothing because I am a coward, he thought. I am not afraid because I have no hope.

He drew in on his cigar, and then, to remain calm, he began to talk, while Jarel watched the lights of the truck, crawling like twin, malign insects toward Bonares. "From the first there has been an impossibility. If the guns were on the Republic side, the guards would have discovered them. If they were on our side, the military commission would have discovered them fifteen years ago."

"Exactly."

"Exactly," Tennente repeated drily.

"Bonares has stopped the truck," Jarel said. It would be simple, he thought, to phone and have the roadblock removed. He looked nervously at Tennente, remembering what the major had said. *You will be afraid again.*

"And I thought that either the guards have been bribed to pass through the guns or else the commission did not do a good job. But the guards could not have been bribed in that fashion or they would have been trapped when we made our surprise inspections."

Tennente had been watching the tip of his cigar, but when Jarel said, "He has left Bonares," he looked up and watched the two small headlights move slowly down the mountain.

"And I had the report of the commission. They did not do a haphazard job. Building a hut, moving outward from the hut, inch by inch—this is not the method of bunglers."

The wind brushed across Jarel's face like a soft, impalpable leaf. "Bonares should have phoned."

"He will," Tennente said. "He will phone to tell you that Gomar brought no guns to the hut. And between these two facts I ran back and forth like a squirrel. Then, this afternoon, at the border hut, when I realized that Bonares found it impossible to lie, I had an idea which grew to a certainty." He smiled mirthlessly. "You know it is very cold up there, with only the snow and high winds for your companions."

The wind, cutting down the path, swept across the terrace. It whipped up the dead brown leaves which were scattered on the terrace and pushed them against the tables. The wind shook the

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doors and windows of the decaying hotel. Somewhere inside there was a sound of rotting wood being torn loose.

"I have never known the wind to be so high," Jarel said. "It makes the terrace dangerous."

"The building was not built strongly," Tennente said. "Pink stucco and cheap marble." That is not the way to build—either a hotel or a nation. One built with honor and integrity, solid stone upon solid stone.

They sat in silence as the lights approached the foot of the mountain. Presently Tennente, with a curious savagery, flung his cigar over the marbled rail of the terrace and looked up toward the hut. "Something is wrong up there. Something is wrong."

"No," Jarel said. "Bonares phoned me just before I came here."

Suddenly Tennente sat very still, but he said only, "Why?"

"He asked me to tell you that Gomar would carry no more guns down the mountain."

For a moment only the sound of the wind and the driven leaves filled the terrace, and then Tennente said, "You are sure those were his exact words? No more guns will come down the mountain?"

"Quite sure," Jarel said, puzzled and very frightened.

A waiter came out and summoned Jarel to the phone. When he came back, he was sweating in the cold night air. "You were right, Major. Half of Gomar's casks contained guns when the border troopers at the roadblock searched them."

He looked across at the lights of the stopped car.

"Anything else?" Tennente asked.

"Yes," Jarel said. "The two border troopers rode down with him. The officer in charge of the roadblock has no explanation."

"They were trying to get away," Tennente said quietly. "They had helped Gomar shoot Bonares."

The two men—the one who understood and the one who did not—sat without speaking, until Jarel could no longer stand being alone with the wind and the gaunt man beside him. "Why?" he asked.

"Because honor is so strange and tenuous a thing," Tennente said. "Because it would allow Lieutenant Bonares to do a terrible thing but would not allow him to lie. Bonares was a good young man, but a naive one, and rather weak. We teach our young officers that they should know nothing of politics. It was so in my time, too. Perhaps it is a good thing, perhaps a bad. He would have killed himself rather than be a traitor. But a little gunrunning now, a profitable and a

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dangerously romantic affair for a poor officer with no chance of promotion. And so he and the guards took Gomar's bribes. But he would not lie.

"When I went up to him today, I showed him a gun and spoke of what that gun would mean in the possession of a traitor. And then we looked together at the map of the military commission. Slowly, I suppose, we realized together: I where the guns were hidden, and he what he had been doing. I noticed, in passing almost, that he would always answer my questions with a kind of formula: 'Gomar brings no guns to the hut.' Never did he say, 'Gomar will take no guns away from the hut.' So when I began to suspect this afternoon, I hoped, I prayed, that he'd speak, but he didn't. Now I know why. He planned to stop Gomar or be killed. His men were not so noble." Tennente shook his head. "It does not matter."

But Jarel said, "Where were the guns?"

"In the only place where the commission did *not* search. Buried deep in the earth *under* the hut—the hut built *before* the commission began to search. The guards weren't bribed to pass the guns through but to give them to Gomar. Each night he would drive to the Republic side, pick up some casks of wine, then drive back to the hut, where the arms casks would be carried up from their pit and loaded aboard. Then the floor planks of the hut would be replaced until the next night. Of course, when we came up, Gomar merely drove down with wine." Tennente smiled. "Logical demonstration," he said.

Jarel stood up. "We can't be sure what has happened at the hut. Perhaps they didn't kill Bonares. Perhaps they—" But Tennente had closed his eyes.

The colonel stood up and walked across the terrace to the door, and then turned and looked back. Tennente had opened his eyes, but his back was half turned to the decaying hotel. He was looking through the darkness to the mountains.

"Q"

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THE JURY BOX
by JON L. BREEN

I confess to enjoying wisecracking private eyes. Characters like Robert B. Parker's Spenser, Robert Crais' Elvis Cole, Richard S. Prather's Shell Scott, or even Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe would probably be insufferable if met in real life, but their offhand insults in print have become a minor art form. Still, if every fictional private investigator spouted one-liners on every page, the hard-boiled subgenre would have far less staying power than it does. Below are noted new cases for three of the very best non-(or seldom-)wisecracking private eyes. Michael Collins' Dan Fortune and Bill Pronzini's Nameless are now among the elder statesmen of the breed, and they are in better form than ever because of their creators' zest for new challenges in every book. The same applies to Robert Irvine's Moroni Traveler, a more recent addition to the ranks.

**** Michael Collins: *The Irishman's Horse,* Fine, $18.95. One-armed Dan Fortune, a New Yorker now operating out of Santa Barbara, is asked by the wife of an idealistic young Chicano State Department employee to find her husband, who seemingly has disappeared in Guatemala. The fast-paced and complex story will keep you reading, while the author's customary social and political points hit their targets squarely. Take, for example, this comment on the drug war: "The government drains the swamps only when the mosquitoes come out and bother the rich."

**** Bill Pronzini: *Breakdown,* Delacorte, $17.95. Since his hostage ordeal in the breathtaking *Shackles* (1988), probably the finest novel in the series and a feasible candidate for classic status in the genre, the unnamed San Francisco P.I. worries that he is not quite the same man, given to anxiety attacks and losses of control. As before, no matter how good the mystery is (and this is a good one), the reader's greatest interest is with the people, including Nameless's longtime companion Kerry Wade (now concerned about her recently widowed mother) and his stalwart but humorless partner, Eberhardt.

**** Robert Irvine: *Called Home,* St. Martin's, $17.95. Salt Lake City's Moroni Traveler goes to rural Sanpete County to find out why client Ellis Nibley's wife, a devout Mormon woman, committed suicide. His discoveries vividly demonstrate the position of women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Those familiar with a well publicized recent case will divine where the story is going, but the background, characters, and strong denouement place this second only to *The Angels' Share* (1989) in the enthralling Traveler saga.

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*** H. R. F. Keating: *The Iciest Sin,* Mysterious, $18.95. The creator of Bombay's Inspector Ghote is another who likes new challenges. This latest, ringing several poignant changes on the theme of blackmail, is less in the comic Golden-Age-mocking style of *The Body in the Billiard Room* (1987) than the more serious problem-in-ethics mode of *Under a Monsoon Cloud* (1986).

*** Eric Ambler: *Waiting for Orders,* Mysterious, $18.95. The complete Ambler short stories constitute a thin book of 133 pages, all but one written in a few weeks in 1939 when the author didn't want to start a new novel until his wartime role was determined. The six detective stories (reminiscent of some of the earlier Hercule Poirot tales with Dr. Jan Czissar in the comic-foreigner tradition) are workmanlike and professional but won't make readers wish Ambler had deserted the intelligent thriller for pure detection. All six, of which "The Case of the Emerald Sky" is the best, were reprinted in *EQMM* in the Forties. The first and last tales, written 33 years apart, are the best in the book and the most like novel-length Ambler.

*** Graham Greene: *The Last Word and Other Stories,* Reinhardt/Viking, $18.95. Though Greene is a much more prolific short-story writer, this collection of twelve mostly uncollected tales (about half criminous) is nearly as thin as Ambler's. Spanning 67 years between original publication dates (1923-1990), the volume is highlighted (for our purposes at least) by "The News in English," a tale of World War II espionage reprinted in *EQMM* in the Forties; "A Branch of the Service," an unusual spy tale original to this volume; and "Murder for the Wrong Reason," a rare and impressive Greene detective story dating from 1929, rescued from oblivion because on rereading it the author surprised himself.

*** John Lawrence Reynolds: *And Leave Her Lay Dying,* Viking, $16.95. The author is Canadian, but his series about police detective Joe McGuire and now-paralyzed partner Ollie Schantz is set in Boston, recently as popular a locale as New York or L.A. Banished to the "grey files" (unsolved but dormant investigations), McGuire looks into the drowning murder of a would-be actress. It's a highly readable procedural, with a surprise ending that (though it's been done before) is handled effectively and with fairly laid clues.

*** Ron Goulart: *Even the Butler Was Poor,* Walker, $18.95. Radio voice-man Ben Spanner and bodice-ripper illustrator H. J. Mavity team up in the first of a new series, very much in the spirit of the fast-paced comic mysteries of the Forties, many of which involved a madcap married couple rather than (as here) a madcap divorced couple. The title is a punchline, as is the dying message boy friend Rick Dell delivers to H. J. before collapsing at her feet in a Connecticut shopping mall: "Ninety-nine clop clop." The novel is short, the plot thinnish, but Goulart is at his funniest, especially good at inventing bizarre business names and imagi-

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nary commercial products.

*** M. C. Beaton: *Death of a Hussy*, St. Martin's, $14.95. Scottish village policeman Hamish Macbeth returns for his fifth adventure, a semi-classical whodunit most notable for its local color and quirky people. Hamish is so popular in Lochdubh that when he is transferred to a more populous beat, the villagers invent imaginary crimes to get him back.

*** Lloyd Biggle, Jr.: *The Glendower Conspiracy*, Council Oak Books, $14.95. This volume from the Brown Bag Mystery series (handsome hardcovers with the cover dimensions of rack-sized paperbacks) is one of the better Sherlock Holmes pastiches, leisurely, atmospheric, and humorous, with much considerable lore and local color from 1904 Wales. As with the author's previous pastiche, *The Quallsford Inheritance*, the narrator is not Dr. Watson but the Baker Street Irregulars graduate Edward Porter Jones. Though best known for his science fiction, Biggle was a frequent *EQMM* contributor in decades gone by.

** Mark McShane: *Mourning Becomes the Hangman*, Doubleday/Crime Club, $14.95. The author of the minor classic *Seance on a Wet Afternoon* (1961) has specialized in off-trail crime fiction for three decades, as himself and (more frequently in recent years) as Marc Lovell. This tale of a couple who devise a complex plot to discredit capital punishment in 1950 Britain is enjoyably written but doesn't find the author at his peak. Most readers are sure to anticipate a virtually inevitable ironic conclusion and will only wonder what improbabilities the author will have to drum up to get there.

** Charlaine Harris: *Real Murders*, Walker, $18.95. For me, this one had a totally irrestible premise: in a small Georgia town, a group of true-crime enthusiasts have their fun interrupted by a series of murders patterned after historic crimes. The execution unfortunately doesn't live up to the initial promise, but librarian-detective Aurora Teagarden's future cases will be worth watching for.

** Mercedes Lambert: *Dogtown*, Viking, $17.95. Struggling young lawyer Whitney Logan agrees to look for a missing housekeeper, an illegal alien, but matters prove much more complicated than she expects. This first novel begins well, introduces some intriguing characters, and certainly does a good job with its Southern California locale. Ultimately, though, I found the plot uninvolving, and the repetitious weight-training episodes got to be a real drag. This belongs to a currently growing subgenre of the mystery, but to say which one would be to give away one of the book's most interesting secrets.

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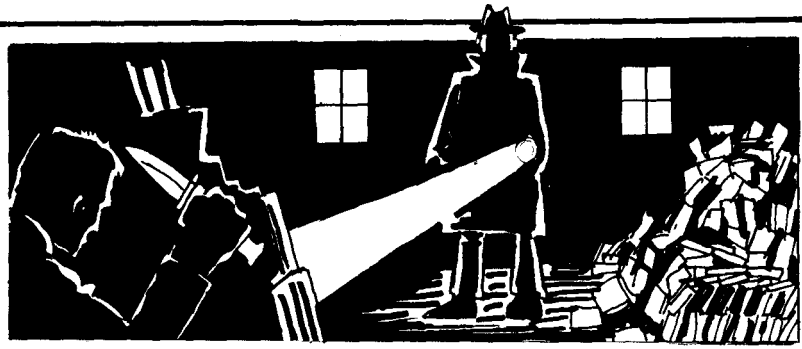

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a *NEW* Captain Leopold story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

"Excuse me, Captain," Patrolman Miller said. "I was just checking around for possible clues and I discovered the door to the boathouse has been forced open. Do you keep a boat there, sir?" he asked the magician.

Furcula's mouth dropped open. "Of course. My powerboat."

"It's not there now."

They hurried down to the boathouse at the water's edge. Furcula's boat was indeed missing, the winch turned to lower it into the water. "Give a description of the boat to Fletcher," Leopold told Furcula. "If we can find it, we may have our killer . . . "

THE RETIRED MAGICIAN

by EDWARD D. HOCH

When Rex Furcula gave his farewell performance at the Majestic Theater in Montreal, it happened that Captain Leopold and his wife Molly were in the audience. They'd been married just a year at the time and had driven up to Montreal for their first anniversary. Though neither of them was a great fan of magic, they found Furcula's final performance fascinating.

A few months later, Molly showed Leopold the evening paper. "Remember Rex Furcula? He's moving here. The paper says he's bought the Stafford place on the Sound for his retirement home."

"I heard that place was on the market for close to a million." Stafford was a senior partner in the city's largest law firm. He'd died at seventy-six after a brief illness and the family had put the property on the market. The brick house itself wasn't large, but there was a small carriage house and the six acres of land bordered on Long Island Sound, with its own boathouse and dock.

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It was a one-day story for the papers, and Leopold heard nothing more of Rex Furcula for two years. His retirement was complete, and if he took part in the city's night life it was as a private citizen, unrecognized by others. Then came a warm morning in late July when Sergeant Fletcher brought the word to Leopold.

"There's been a killing reported at the Furcula place on the Sound. Should I handle it or—?"

"I'll come along," Leopold told him. "Who was killed?"

"A woman. No further identification yet. A patrol car's at the house now."

"Let's go."

Leopold's city had a public beach at the end of Ocean Avenue and private homes along Beach Street, which ran east and west from Ocean Avenue. Rex Furcula's home was located about a mile east of the public area, hidden from the street by a dense stand of fir trees. Leopold recognized the retired magician at once: there was no mistaking the tall slender man with the black goatee and piercing dark eyes. On the posters for his show, he'd seemed the quintessential stage magician but here in retirement he was still the same impeccable wizard come to meet his audience.

"I'm Captain Leopold. What's happened here?"

"I'm afraid my sister has been killed," Furcula said.

Leopold left Fletcher to get the pertinent information and proceeded to the carriage house. Patrolman Miller, who he knew slightly, was standing by the door. He stepped aside to let Leopold enter. "Woman named Theresa Cottswood, Captain. She lived here with her brother and his wife. It looks like she might have surprised a burglar."

Walking into the brick carriage house, Leopold had the sudden feeling that he was backstage at a theater. The walls were lined with garishly painted trick cabinets, mirrors, and draperies. There were magicians' tables and top hats, a wonderment of wands, and even a black caldron left over from some witches' sabbat. Some of the things he remembered from the performance he'd seen in Montreal, others were strange to him. But he tore his gaze away to focus on the grey-haired woman on the floor. Her head was bloodied from the force of repeated blows, and a blood-stained length of pipe lay nearby. Her skin was cold to Leopold's touch. She'd been dead for some time.

Before long, the police technical unit arrived and Leopold left the

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scene to them. He returned to Fletcher and Rex Furcula. "You say the dead woman is your sister, Mr. Furcula?"

The black-bearded man nodded. "Poor Theresa—what a way to die—at only fifty-two!"

"She was younger than you?"

"That's right. I'm sixty-one."

"When did you find the body?"

"Around ten o'clock, just before I phoned. She didn't appear at breakfast and when I checked her room the bed was empty. I looked everywhere in the house for her and finally came out here. I noticed that a small pane of glass on the door had been broken and I came in to investigate. That's when I found her."

"You say her bed was empty. Had it been slept in?"

"I believe so. It was rumpled."

"And yet she's not wearing nightclothes, even though the medical examiner says the body temperature indicates she may have died around six this morning. Was anything missing in there?"

"I didn't really have a chance to look. I'm a retired performer, Captain—a stage magician—and the carriage house contains all my stage equipment."

"Has your sister lived here with you since your retirement?"

"No, only for the past year or so. Her husband died of a heart attack, and with this large house I felt we should take her in."

Leopold glanced up toward the house. "Is your wife—?"

"She's away. I don't expect her back until next week."

"So the two of you were alone here."

"Yes."

"Don't you need servants for a place this size?"

"A woman comes in to clean and cook dinner, and we have a service to take care of the grounds."

Patrolman Miller appeared and interrupted them. "Excuse me, Captain. I was just checking around for possible clues and I discovered the door to the boathouse has been forced open. Do you keep a boat in there, sir?"

Furcula's mouth dropped open. "Of course. My powerboat."

"It's not there now."

They hurried down to the boathouse at the water's edge. Furcula's boat was indeed missing, the winch turned to lower it into the water. "Give a description of the boat to Fletcher," Leopold told Furcula. "If we can find it, we may have our killer."

Later that afternoon, a police helicopter searching the coastline

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of Long Island Sound spotted the missing craft run up on some rocks about five miles away. The thief apparently had been knocked unconscious in the crash and flung into the shallow water, where he drowned. He was later identified from fingerprints as twenty-seven-year-old Jose Martinez, a New Yorker with a criminal record that included arrests for burglary and possession of drugs. What he was doing on the north shore of Long Island Sound was never explained, but it seemed clear that he had killed Theresa Cottswood when she surprised him in the carriage house.

A week later, the case was closed.

Out of necessity, Captain Leopold had held several meetings and conversations with Rex Furcula during the course of the investigation. He found that he liked the man, and when Furcula's wife returned home for the funeral he liked her, too. Stella Furcula was much younger than her husband, a thin blonde woman in her early thirties. It developed that she'd been the magician's assistant during his last few years before he retired.

"Rex used to saw me in half every night," she said. "Twice on matinee days."

"How long have you been married?" Leopold asked her.

"Nearly three years. We were married during his final tour."

"It must be dull for you now."

"Oh, no, I enjoy it. But I wish we got to see more people. Are you married, Captain?"

"Yes."

"Would you and your wife come out to dinner some night?"

It was the sort of vague invitation Leopold occasionally received during the course of an investigation and he thought no more about it, but about two months later Molly greeted him one evening: "Remember Rex Furcula? His wife phoned today to invite us to dinner next week. What do you think?"

"Interesting. What did you tell her?"

"I said I'd have to check your schedule and call her back tomorrow."

"Would you like to go?"

"Why not? We don't see that many new people these days. It might be fun."

Molly wore a short, glittery dress and Leopold put on the suit he usually wore to political dinners. They drove out to the Furcula house the following Thursday evening, arriving a few minutes after

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seven. Stella Furcula answered the door herself, and if she was surprised that Molly was no older than herself she gave no sign. The two women chatted amicably as Furcula took the Leopolds on a tour of the house.

"I know you saw most of this during the investigation," he told Leopold, "but I thought your wife might be interested."

"I'm sure she is."

It was still light out when they crossed the yard and entered the carriage house. "Rex is really proud of this collection," Stella told them. "He shows it at every opportunity. It's too bad that terrible thing had to happen here."

They paused at a large poster showing the showman in satanic garb, with the title "The Wizard of Magic" circling his head like a halo. Then Rex pointed out his collection of trick cabinets and mirrors and drapes.

"What are all these wands for?" Molly asked.

Furcula smiled. "Each has a different purpose, my dear. This is a coin wand." As he spoke, a half dollar magically appeared at the end opposite to where he held it. "Or perhaps you'd prefer the auto-gravity wand that remains on a table even though three-quarters of its length is beyond the table's edge. And here's a cigar wand, similar to the coin wand." He smiled, his slender fingers caressing each wand. "The swallowing wand." He smiled at Stella and she obediently opened her mouth. The wand seemed to descend into it for two-thirds of its length.

"Is that the sort of thing you used to do on stage?" Molly asked her.

Stella nodded cheerfully. "When I wasn't walking through brick walls or being sawed in half."

"And," her husband resumed the tour, "the vanishing wand."

It seemed to do exactly that, before their eyes.

At dinner, the conversation was brisk and Molly managed to learn a few professional secrets. "We saw the final performance in Montreal," she told Stella over the soup course, served by a plump Irish cook named Nellie. "You mentioned walking through the wall and being sawed in half. How in heaven's name did you manage those? They looked impossible to me."

Stella glanced at her husband. He gave a slight nod and she said, "I suppose I can tell you. Those tricks are pretty widely known. Both require a really thin girl—which I think explains my original appeal to Rex."

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Furcula smiled. "There was more to it than that."

"In the wall trick, a trap door opens in the stage under the rug or sheet the wall rests upon. It lets the fabric sag a bit, and with the screens shielding me from the audience I managed to wiggle beneath the wall and come up on the other side. Then the trap door closes and the floor seems solid again when the screens are removed.

"Sawing the lady in half, there are two of us, of course. The other girl, doubled up in one half of the box, sticks her feet through the holes as I climb in. I double up and occupy only the other half, with my head and hands showing. That way the box can be separated after sawing."

"Amazing," Molly said. "Did you know all this, Jules?"

Leopold laughed. "More or less, but it's nice to have it confirmed by a professional."

Dinner was delicious, and after another hour of pleasant conversation Leopold and Molly headed for home.

"That was nice," she said as they drove through the night. "We should invite them back one evening. I like Stella, and he's pleasant enough."

Early the following week, while Leopold was poring over the weekend reports, Fletcher interrupted him. "Sorry to bother you, Captain, but I've got someone on the phone from Masterplan Insurance. They're getting ready to pay off a life policy on Theresa Cottswood, and because of the violent nature of her death they want to be certain we're satisfied the case is closed."

"It's closed," Leopold confirmed. Then, as an afterthought, he asked, "Who's the beneficiary—her brother?"

"That's right. They took out identical life-insurance policies on each other about a year ago."

"How much?"

"A million each."

Leopold whistled quietly. "The magician's going to have a nice retirement, if he hasn't already."

It was a month before Molly suggested having the Furculas for dinner, and Leopold agreed. The evening proved equally as pleasant, although Molly's generous cocktails before dinner gave Stella a bit of a glow. "I miss performing," she said at one point. "It's different with Rex. He doesn't need the money and he was ready to retire, but I'm still young."

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If Furcula was unhappy with the remark, he didn't show it. "It's difficult for a younger wife. Do you find it so, Molly?"

"Well," Molly said, "we're both still working, and after Jules retires I plan to continue my legal career."

"Stella has outside interests," Furcula told them. "She still attends a magicians' convention every year."

"*Do* you?" Molly said. "That must be fascinating."

Stella nodded. "That's where I was the week Theresa was killed. Sometimes I think I'd like to put together a little nightclub act, using some of Rex's old equipment."

"But it's difficult for a woman," Furcula explained. "For one thing, Stella's fingers aren't the right shape for the sort of closeup magic you do in nightclubs." He reached over to take her hand. "Notice her fingers. They're short and a bit pudgy—not the long, slender kind a close-up artist needs."

"Oh," she told him, pulling her hand away, "with the right equipment I could be as good as you any day."

The increasingly serious banter was beginning to disturb Leopold and he changed the subject. "Why are magicians often portrayed as devils? That poster of yours—"

"It's only one of many I used. The conjurer's problem has always been to convince journalists that his act is of special interest to the reading public. From early in this century, famous magicians have portrayed themselves as in league with dark forces. It's all promotion, like this little goatee I wear."

Stella laughed. "It's grey, you know. He only blackens it with a wash-out dye when he's going out or making a public appearance."

"You're giving away my secrets," Rex told her.

Molly retreated to the kitchen to check on dinner and Leopold hoped it would be coming soon.

At the end of the evening, when the Furculas departed, Leopold said, "I'm always uneasy when people argue, even in a light manner."

"The drinks hit Stella a little hard."

"You shouldn't make them so strong."

In bed that night, as he was falling asleep, Leopold suddenly came awake, sitting upright. "What is it?" Molly asked.

"His beard!"

"What about it?"

"If he only dyes it black when he performs or is going to see people,

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why was it black the morning his sister was killed? Why did he dye it black unless he knew that he'd be seen by outsiders?"

"Oh, go to sleep, darling," Molly complained, rolling over in the bed.

But Leopold didn't sleep for a long time.

The following Monday morning Leopold called Sergeant Connie Trent into his office and asked to see the files on the Theresa Cottswood case. "I thought that was closed," she said.

"It is, but I want to look them over. After Jose Martinez died in the boat accident, I left it pretty much in Fletcher's hands. I was thinking over the weekend how little I knew about the victim."

The files weren't thick, since the official investigation had been a short one. Leopold started reading the report on Theresa Furcula Cottswood and her brother. Both had been born of middle-class parents in Cleveland, Ohio. Theresa had married a tailor with his own small shop, but he'd died the year before he turned fifty. She'd lived alone until her brother retired from the stage, then he'd bought the house on the Sound and she'd moved in with him and his new wife. That must have been about the time they'd taken out the joint life-insurance policies. There were no other living relatives, and Leopold supposed the policy had been meant as a measure of security for Theresa if Rex died first and left his house and other possessions to Stella.

That was about all. Police questioning of the neighbors had turned up very little—Furcula and his family kept pretty much to themselves and the adjoining houses were not close. The retired magician wasn't a wealthy man and the estate was heavily mortaged, though he'd kept up his payments.

Leopold closed the file with a sigh. It told him very little. The file on Jose Martinez told him even less. He'd been a street punk from New York, with the usual sort of juvenile record before he'd graduated to drugs and burglary. Nothing bigger, though: fancy motorboats didn't figure into his lifestyle.

Leopold sighed. He put away the files and turned to other business.

Leopold and Molly hadn't really expected to receive another invitation from the Furculas, and certainly not as soon as the following week. But Stella phoned one evening to invite them over for a small cocktail party they were giving. An old colleague, a mindreader named Argos, was performing at a local dinner theater, and they

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wanted to fete him while he was in town. The party would be on Monday, because that was the only night he didn't perform.

"It should be entertaining," Molly said.

He wasn't so sure, but they went nonetheless. They arrived at six o'clock to find a half dozen cars in the driveway. Inside, a catering service was helping the cook, Nellie, pass trays of food and drinks among the dozen or so other guests. Leopold recognized some local theater people and art enthusiasts and learned it was the first invitation to the Furculas' for most of them.

He and Molly were drinking white wine when Stella spotted them and hurried over. "You were wonderful to come. Rex and I know so few local people, even after two years, but we wanted to put on this little affair for Argos."

The mindreader was probably still in his forties and seemed pleasant. Stella knew him well enough to challenge him, and when she asked him to guess Leopold's occupation he struck out badly, coming up with a bank vice-president. After Stella and Molly enjoyed a good laugh, Leopold's police connection was revealed.

"They met during the investigation of Theresa's murder," Stella explained.

Argos turned serious. "I was terribly sorry to hear about that. I wish I could have gotten here for the services."

"I was out of town myself when it happened," Stella told him. "At the magic convention. I made it back in time for the funeral. Rex took it very hard."

Leopold's memory of his first meeting with Furcula didn't include any tears or emotion. He remembered thinking that the man had seemed quite calm until the discovery of the stolen boat.

There was a small framed photograph of Rex and his sister on the piano, their faces overexposed as they squinted into the sun. "That would have been about ten years ago," Argos guessed, squinting back at the picture, "just after I first met them."

"Did Theresa travel with him?"

"No, her husband was still alive. But she often came to see him if he was appearing in her part of the country. I appeared with Rex in something called *A Night of Magic*, in Cleveland, and she came backstage. She was a lively woman, very likable."

"Yes, she was," Stella agreed. "I loved her like my own sister."

Leopold left them with Molly and moved off toward Nellie. Taking an hors d'oeuvre from the tray, he said, "Nellie, do you have a minute?"

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Nellie peered at him. "Oh, it's Mr. Leopold, isn't it? Captain Leopold?"

"That's right, Nellie. I just wanted to ask you something about the night Mrs. Cottswood was killed. Were you here that night?"

"No, sir—I didn't start until the following week. That would be Susan Ander you'd be wanting. She left the Furculas' employ about that time."

"I didn't know that. Why did she leave?"

"I couldn't say, sir. She was already gone when I arrived. She moved to Baltimore."

"Do you know her address?"

"Yes, and her phone number, too. It's on file in the kitchen."

"Could you get it for me?"

She hesitated only an instant. "Certainly, Captain."

Leopold drifted back to the others. Nellie didn't reappear immediately, but before they left she came up to him with a folded piece of paper. "Here's that information you wanted, sir."

"Thank you, Nellie."

"What was that about?" Molly wondered.

"I'll tell you later."

But Stella Furcula had also noticed the exchange. "I hope Nellie wasn't slipping you the recipe for my onion soup," she smiled.

Leopold laughed. "Nothing so devious. I was asking her about Rex's sister and she told me you had another cook at that time."

"Yes—Susan. She was devoted to Rex's sister. Sometimes they went to the movies together, and occasionally Theresa gave her one of her dresses. Rex was very surprised when she left."

"Was it because of the killing?"

"I suppose it might have had something to do with it. She didn't even stay for the funeral."

"Odd, if they were so friendly."

"Rex thought she seemed frightened when she gave her notice, but by that time the police had found the wrecked boat and that man's body: she knew there was no killer still at large."

"Would you have any objection if I contacted Susan?"

"Certainly not. Give her our best wishes if you do."

When Stella moved away to mingle with the other guests, Leopold watched to see if she headed toward Rex with a report on this kitchen intrigue, but she didn't go near him, and the next time Leopold noticed her she was deep in conversation with Argos, the guest of honor.

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On the way home, he filled Molly in on what he'd been up to. She shook her head and reprimanded him. "They're going to think you're still investigating them. I thought the case was closed months ago."

"It was. It still is. I just wonder what frightened the cook away."

"You asked Stella for permission to speak to her? What if she'd said no?"

"I'd have done it anyway."

It took Leopold three phone calls over the next two days before he was able to reach Susan Ander. She was a mature, pleasant-sounding woman. "You say you're a police captain? Whatever are you phoning me for?"

"I'm a detective captain, actually," Leopold told her. "I was called into the investigation of the murder of Theresa Cottswood. We never realized there was a live-in cook on the premises at the time."

"There wasn't. I just came in to cook and clean, like the one they have now. I wasn't there when it happened."

"You were friendly with the deceased?"

"We were good friends."

"Might I ask why you left the Furculas' employ so suddenly?"

"Theresa's murder was a terrible shock to me. I'd had an offer of a job down here and decided to take it. I told Mr. Furcula, phoned the landlord at my apartment, and just left. I didn't even stay for the funeral service. I wanted to remember her alive."

"Where are you working now, Miss Ander?"

"At a restaurant here in Baltimore. A seafood place by the harbor."

"I have to ask you a very frank question. Did you have any reason to suspect that Theresa Cottswood's death might have been caused by her brother?"

"By Mr. Furcula? Certainly not! They were very close."

"What can you tell me about the boat that was stolen by Jose Martinez?"

"It was Mr. Furcula's boat, but he didn't use it often. He took it out on weekends sometimes, in good weather."

"What time did you usually arrive at the house?"

"Around eight o'clock. The family liked to have breakfast before nine."

"Thank you for your help, Miss Ander. I may want to contact you again if I have more questions."

Leopold returned to the file once more and picked out the statement of a fisherman who'd been first to arrive at the scene of the

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boat accident. "I'd seen him pass me earlier," it read. "I thought there was a man and a woman in the boat, but I may have been wrong. When I found the boat up on the rocks, there was only the man. The accident had thrown him into shallow water and he'd drowned."

He buzzed for Connie. "Do you have the autopsy report on Theresa Cottswood?"

"Nope. Everything's there." She rummaged around in the file and came up with it. "Right in front of your nose, Captain."

He sighed. "I guess my eyes are failing me. Is there any evidence she tried to fight off her attacker?"

Connie skimmed the relevant paragraph. "Fingernails normal, unbroken. No fresh wounds on the hands. Just a cut that had scabbed over and a week-old burn."

"She didn't try to fight him off. Does that mean she knew him?"

"He might have hit her from behind."

"Blows on the temple like this would suggest she was partly turned toward him."

"Captain, are you trying to say that her brother killed her?"

"No, I'm—" What *was* he trying to do? "Connie, I want you to find out where that magic convention was held—the one Stella Furcula attended. Try to get a complete list of attendees. They usually keep such things for next year's mailing list."

That evening at home, Leopold was in a bad mood. When Molly asked him why, he admitted, "I've grown to like the Furculas. But I may have to reopen the case."

"Because of something you learned while we were their guests?"

"In a way. I still have a duty to perform and I can't let that interfere."

"You think he killed his sister for the insurance money?"

"There's another possibility I'm checking on, but I like it even less."

"It could have been just what it seemed, Jules."

"In a magic act, nothing is ever quite what it seems," he reminded her.

By midmorning of the following day, Connie had the information he'd requested. "The magic convention was held in Omaha this year. The organizers faxed me a list of the delegates."

Leopold accepted the several pages she offered, saw that the list

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was alphabetical, and scanned down the first page. "There's no Argos," she told him. "I already looked."

"Sometimes I think you can read my mind."

"You mentioned meeting him at Furcula's house, and he's been performing in town. It seemed likely."

"Argos is probably just a stage name. He may have been registered under his real name, which we don't know." He turned the page and found Stella Furcula's name.

"Of course, this list is no proof the people actually attended," Connie pointed out. "It just means they paid the registration fee."

Leopold grunted. "Omaha." He closed his eyes and leaned back in his chair. A few minutes later he sat up, almost surprised to see the look of concern on Connie's face.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

"I'm fine. Get us a couple of plane tickets for this afternoon."

"To Omaha?"

He shook his head. "Baltimore. We're going to see the Furculas' cook."

It was raining in Baltimore when their plane landed. Connie had phoned ahead and a detective from the local police department met their plane. They drove to Susan Ander's apartment on Light Street and rang the bell, but nobody answered.

"She mentioned working at a seafood restaurant down by the harbor, but there are a lot of those," Leopold said, pressing the buzzer again. When nothing happened, the Baltimore detective, whose name was Schwartz, suggested they wait in the car.

As they walked back across the street, Leopold suddenly touched Connie's arm. "There she is," he said, indicating a bare-headed woman of about fifty who was walking toward them, carrying a bag of groceries.

"How do you know?"

Leopold didn't answer. Instead, he stepped across the damp sidewalk to intercept her. "Pardon me—you're Susan Ander, aren't you?"

"Yes." She looked from one to the other, her eyes blinking behind her eyeglasses. "What is it?"

"I'm Captain Leopold—I spoke with you on the phone."

"Oh, yes, Captain."

"This is Sergeant Connie Trent and Detective Schwartz of the Baltimore police."

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Schwartz took over. "We'd like you to accompany us to headquarters for questioning, ma'am."

"Are you accusing me of something?"

"Suspicion of murder."

Susan Ander gave a short, sharp laugh and turned to Leopold. "Do you think *I* killed Theresa Cottswood?"

Leopold shook his head. "No. I think you killed the real Susan Ander, Mrs. Cottswood."

The part of the case that Leopold hated most was confronting the Furculas the following morning at their home.

"I don't understand you," Stella said. "What are you trying to tell us?"

"I'm afraid what I'm telling you isn't news to your husband, Stella. After all, he's the one who falsely identified the body as that of his sister."

Rex Furcula sat down, the color drained from his face. "Where is Theresa now, please?"

"Still in Baltimore. If she doesn't waive extradition, we'll file the necessary papers tomorrow."

"You can't prove murder."

"We can prove insurance fraud. She's the walking proof of it. We'll use that to extradite her and then work on the murder charges. Our best case against her is probably in the killing of Jose Martinez. Either one of you might have killed the cook, Susan Ander."

"Rex!" Stella screamed. "What is this? Tell him it's not true!"

He ran a tongue over his dry lips. "I never killed anyone, Captain. I knew nothing about it until it was over."

Stella appealed to Leopold. "I don't understand any of this."

"It was a plot to defraud the insurance company out of a million dollars," Leopold explained. "Theresa Cottswood hired Susan Ander as cook a full year ago, choosing someone about her size and age and coloring. She waited until a time when you were away because it was important that you didn't see the body. Then she called Susan there early that morning, took her out to the carriage house, and beat her to death with a length of pipe. Martinez was someone she—or you, Rex—hired in New York to come up and help her get away in the boat. Of course, he didn't know what was in store for him. Theresa had him run the boat onto some rocks down the coast and then knocked him out and left him to drown. She went to Baltimore and took a job under Susan Ander's name, because it was

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important the cook appear to be alive until after the insurance settlement. Afterward, she could move again and drop out of sight, then start a new life with her money. Is that about right, Rex?"

Furcula lowered his head, running a hand across his face. "I was afraid you'd find out. It's why I struck up this friendship with you, so I'd know if you were suspicious. Theresa always had these crazy schemes, even when she was in school. I suppose I did, too, but I became a stage magician and used them to entertain people. Killing a person meant no more to Theresa than when I sawed Stella in half. It was fantasy—I think she half expected her victims to return for a curtain call after it was over."

Stella had been sitting with an expression of growing horror on her face. "How did you know all this, Captain?"

"I didn't, not right away. I considered the possibility that Rex killed his sister, or even that you sneaked back here from the convention and killed her, possibly with the help of Argos."

"But—"

"But then all the little clues began to point the way toward the truth."

"What little clues?"

Leopold began counting them off on his fingers. "The only picture of Theresa on public display here is a decade-old snapshot of Rex and her squinting into the sun, their faces overexposed. It gives nothing, really, but a general impression. I knew Susan Ander was about the same size because your cook told me Theresa sometimes passed her dresses on to Susan. That was why the victim was fully dressed, even though the crime must have taken place around six in the morning. Susan arrived wearing one of those hand-me-down dresses, no doubt on Theresa's instructions."

"What about the boat?" Stella was crying now.

"Martinez was hired to steal it, of course—and to become the fall guy in the murder plot. A fisherman thought he saw a woman in the boat with Martinez before the accident, and that got me thinking. I thought of you, Stella, as I've said, and then I thought of Susan Ander. Her story of her sudden departure didn't make sense. She and Rex both insisted she wasn't here the morning of the murder, yet she admitted leaving the job suddenly because of the killing. But why wouldn't she have been here? She started work at eight that morning and the body wasn't found until ten.

"I began considering her as a suspect, but then a funny thing happened. Sergeant Trent was checking the autopsy report for me

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and she happened to mention there were no recent hand injuries, as in a struggle—there were only a scabbed-over cut and a week-old burn. These struck me as the sort of injuries one receives in the kitchen—minor cooking injuries. Was it possible that the dead woman was the departed cook, Susan Ander? Her landlord never saw her when she moved out that day. He only received a call from her, and Theresa could have imitated her voice after knowing her and socializing with her for a year. The body wasn't on view, and Theresa's few friends—including you, Stella—saw only a closed coffin at the grave. So I went to Baltimore yesterday, and when I was able to pick out the supposed Susan on the street I knew my theory was correct."

"Can you prove that to a jury?" Rex Furcula asked.

"The fraud charge will be easy enough, and she was alone in the boat with Martinez when he was killed. As for Susan Ander, I think we can bring down indictments against both you and your sister."

"I told you it was her idea," Rex protested. "She planned the whole thing. I was simply to collect the insurance money and turn it over to her. I wanted none of it."

Stella took his hand, wanting to believe him. Leopold only said, "We'll let a jury decide. Perhaps you can pull off one more trick and stay out of prison. But you might get more sympathy if you let your goatee stay grey for the trial."

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

EPITAPH

by RUTH L. MITCHELL

He hinted that someday he'd kill me
'Cause he hated my joking patter—
I guess what I thought was so funny
He considered a very grave matter.

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EQMM 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONTEST

Only twenty questions more in our 50th Anniversary Contest. Numbers 31–35 are below. Hold off sending them until you have them all (with the October issue), then follow the rules on the facing page in sending them to us.

31. and 32. Ruth Rendell won an Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America for two stories that appeared first in EQMM. Name both.

33. and 34. Name two British recipients of the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America whose fiction has appeared in EQMM.

35. Name the author and/or the story from EQMM from which we quote: "Fred Collyer relaxed and smiled at the thought, and the next minute knew quite suddenly that it hadn't been a dream at all. He had heard Marius Follman and Piper Bowles planning a diversion on Crinkle Cut, and he had forgotten because he'd been drunk."

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First Prize: Limited-edition poster of *EQMM*'s first cover
Fifty Years of the Best from Ellery Queen, edited by Eleanor Sullivan, published by Carroll & Graf
Ellery Queen 50th Anniversary mug
The option to appear on a cover of *EQMM* with a celebrity of the winner's choice who agrees to said cover

Second and Third Prizes: Limited-edition poster of *EQMM*'s first cover

Fourth through Thirteenth Prizes: *Fifty Years of the Best from Ellery Queen*

Fourteenth through Twenty-third Prizes: Ellery Queen 50th Anniversary mugs

The winner will be the top scorer in answering 50 questions related to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*—there will be 5 questions an issue from January through October 1991. In case of a tie, the earliest postmark will determine the winner. The deadline is October 15, 1991—entries should carry a postmark no later than that date.

All 50 questions must be submitted as a unit, the pages or copies of the pages for all ten issues together. Material sent in sections will not be considered. Only one entry will be allowed per person. All entries must include the contestant's legal name and full address. No entries will be returned, even if accompanied by a return envelope. Winners will be notified by mail and announced in the March 1992 issue. (No phone calls, please.)

Contributors to *EQMM* are not eligible to win the contest, nor are employees and their immediate families of Davis Publications, Inc., Carlson Promotion Group, or any of their affiliated agents, advertising, and promotional production agencies. All applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations apply.

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a distinguished reprint by

P. D. JAMES

Neither Harold Vinson nor his wife seemed to appreciate their possession. He grumbled about the expense; she grumbled about the housework. The perfectly proportioned facade, so beautiful that it took the breath, seemed to leave them as unmoved as if they lived in a square brick box. Even the furniture, which had been bought with the house, was regarded by them with as little respect as if it were cheap reproduction.

In reviewing the fiction of P. D. James and Ruth Rendell in the October 4, 1982 issue of New York, *Ann Arensberg wrote: "Christie's novels are escapist literature, but James and Rendell will not supply an antidote to worry or insomnia, nor do they hedge the questions that are raised by the act of murder. They are concerned with the roots of evil, the reality of death, and the mysteries of the human heart . . . In their two new novels, James and Rendell prove, as they have proved before, how elastic and capacious the detective-story genre can be . . ."*

A VERY DESIRABLE RESIDENCE

by P. D. JAMES

During and after Harold Vinson's trial, at which I was a relatively unimportant prosecution witness, there was the usual uninformed, pointless, and repetitive speculation about whether those of us who knew him would ever have guessed that he was a man capable of scheming to murder his wife. I was supposed to have known him better than most of the school staff and my colleagues

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found it irritatingly self-righteous of me to be so very reluctant to be drawn into the general gossip about what, after all, was the school's major scandal in twenty years. "You knew them both. You used to visit the house. You saw them together. Didn't you guess?" they insisted, obviously feeling that I had been in some way negligent, that I ought to have seen what was going on and prevented it. No, I never guessed; or, if I did, I guessed wrong. But they were perfectly right. I could have prevented it.

I first met Harold Vinson when I took up a post as junior art master at the comprehensive school where he taught mathematics to the senior forms. It wasn't too discouraging a place as these teaching factories go. The school was centered on the old Eighteenth Century grammar school, with some not too hideous modern additions, in a pleasant enough commuter town on the river about twenty miles southeast of London. It was a predominantly middle-class community, a little smug and culturally self-conscious, but hardly intellectually exciting. Still, it suited me well enough for a first post. I don't object to the middle class or their habitats—I'm middle class myself. And I knew that I was lucky to get the job. Mine is the usual story of an artist with sufficient talent but without enough respect for the fashionable idiocies of the contemporary artistic establishment to make a decent living. More dedicated men choose to live in cheap bed-sitting rooms and keep on painting. I'm fussy about where and how I live, so, for me, it was a diploma in the teaching of art and West Fairing Comprehensive.

It only took one evening in Vinson's home for me to realize that he was a sadist. I don't mean that he tormented his pupils. He wouldn't have been allowed to get away with it had he tried. These days the balance of power in the classroom has shifted with a vengeance and any tormenting is done by the children. No, as a teacher, he was surprisingly patient and conscientious, a man with real enthusiasm for his subject ("discipline" was the word he preferred to use, being something of an intellectual snob and given to academic jargon) and with a surprising talent for communicating that enthusiasm to the children. He was a fairly rigid disciplinarian, but I've never found that children dislike firmness provided a master doesn't indulge in that pedantic sarcasm which, by taking advantage of the children's inability to compete, is resented as particularly unfair.

He got them through their examinations, too. Say what you like, that's something middle-class kids and their parents appreciate. I'm sorry to have slipped into using the word "kids," that modern shib-

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boleth with its blend of condescension and sycophancy. Vinson never used it. It was his habit to talk about the alumni of the sixth. At first I thought it was an attempt at mildly pretentious humor, but now I wonder. He wasn't really a humorous man. The rigid muscles of his face seldom cracked into a smile, and when they did it was as disconcerting as a painful grimace. With his lean, slightly stooping figure, the grave eyes behind the hornrimmed spectacles, the querulous lines etched deeply from the nose to the corners of his unyielding mouth, he looked deceptively what we all thought he was—a middle-aged, disagreeable, and not very happy pedant.

No, it wasn't his precious alumni he bullied and tyrannized over. It was his wife. The first time I saw Emily Vinson was when I sat next to her at Founder's Memorial Day, an archaic function inherited from the grammar school and regarded with such reverence that even those masters' wives who seldom showed their faces at the school felt obliged to make an appearance. She was, I guessed, almost twenty years younger than her husband, a thin, anxious-looking woman with auburn hair which had faded early and the very pale, transparent-looking skin which often goes with that coloring. She was expensively and smartly dressed, too incongruously smartly for such a nondescript woman—so that the ill-chosen, too fashionable suit merely emphasized her frail ordinariness. But her eyes were remarkable, an unusual grey-green, huge and slightly exophthalmic under the arched narrow eyebrows. She seldom turned them on me, but when, from time to time, she gave me a swift elliptical glance it was as astounding as turning over an amateurish Victorian oil and discovering a Corot.

It was at the end of Founder's Memorial Day that I received my first invitation to visit them at their home. I found that they lived in some style. She had inherited from her father a small but perfectly proportioned Georgian house which stood alone in some two acres of ground with lawns slanting green down to the river. Apparently her father was a builder who had bought the house cheaply from its impoverished owner with the idea of demolishing it and building a block of flats. The planning authority had slapped on a preservation order just in time and he had died in weeks, no doubt from chagrin, leaving the house and its contents to his daughter.

Neither Harold Vinson nor his wife seemed to appreciate their possession. He grumbled about the expense; she grumbled about the housework. The perfectly proportioned facade, so beautiful that it took the breath, seemed to leave them as unmoved as if they lived

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in a square brick box. Even the furniture, which had been bought with the house, was regarded by them with as little respect as if it were cheap reproduction. When at the end of my first visit I complimented Vinson on the spaciousness and proportions of the dining room he replied,

"A house is only the space between four walls. What does it matter if they are far apart or close together, or what they are made of? You're still in a cage." His wife was carrying the plates into the kitchen at the time and didn't hear him. He spoke so low that I scarcely heard him myself. I'm not even sure now that I was meant to hear.

Marriage is both the most public and the most secret of institutions, its miseries as irritatingly insistent as a hacking cough, its private malaise less easily diagnosed. And nothing is so destructive as unhappiness to social life. No one wants to sit in embarrassed silence while his host and hostess demonstrate their mutual incompatibility and dislike. Emily Vinson could, it seemed, hardly open her mouth without irritating her husband. No opinion she expressed was worth listening to. Her small domestic chat—which was, after all, all she had—invariably provoked him by its banality so that he would put down his knife and fork with a look of patient, resigned boredom as soon as, with a nervous preparatory glance at him, she would steel herself to speak. If she had been an animal, cringing away with that histrionic, essentially false look of piteous entreaty, I can see that the temptation to kick would be irresistible. And, verbally, Vinson kicked.

Not surprisingly, they had few friends. Looking back, it would probably be more true to say that they had no real friends. The only colleague of his who visited from the school apart from myself was Vera Pelling, the junior science teacher, and she, poor girl, was such an unattractive bore that there weren't many alternatives open to her.

Vera Pelling is the living refutation of that theory so beloved, I understand, of beauty and fashion journalists in women's magazines that any woman if she takes the trouble can make something of her appearance. Nothing could be done about Vera's piglike eyes and nonexistent chin, and, reasonably enough, she didn't try. I am sorry if I sound harsh. She wasn't a bad sort. And if she thought that making a fourth with me at an occasional free supper with the Vinsons was better than eating alone in her furnished flat, I suppose

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she had her reasons, as I had mine. I never remember having visited the Vinsons without Vera, although Emily came to my flat on three occasions, with Harold's approval, to sit for her portrait. It wasn't a success. The result looked like a pastiche of an early Stanley Spencer. Whatever it was I was trying to capture, that sense of a secret life conveyed in the rare grey-green flash of those remarkable eyes, I didn't succeed.

When Vinson saw the portrait, he said: "You were prudent, my boy, to opt for teaching as a livelihood. Although, looking at this effort, I would say that the choice was hardly voluntary." For once I was tempted to agree with him.

Vera Pelling and I became oddly obsessed with the Vinsons. Walking home after one of their supper parties, we would mull over the traumas of the evening like an old married couple perennially discussing the inadequacies of a couple of relatives we actively disliked but couldn't bear not to see. Vera was a tolerable mimic and would imitate Vinson's dry, pedantic tones.

" 'My dear, I think that you recounted that not very interesting domestic drama last time we had supper together.'

" 'And what, my dear, have you been doing with yourself today? What fascinating conversation did you have with the estimable Mrs. Wilcox while you cleaned the drawing room together?' "

Really, confided Vera, tucking her arm through mine, it had become so embarrassing that it was almost enough to put her off visiting them. But not quite enough, apparently. Which was why she, too, was at the Vinsons' on the night when it happened.

On the evening of the crime—the phrase has a stereotyped but dramatic ring which isn't inappropriate to what, look at it as you will, was no ordinary villainy—Vera and I were due at the school at 7:00 P.M. to help with the dress rehearsal of the school play. I was responsible for the painted backcloth and some of the props and Vera for the makeup. It was an awkward time, too early for a proper meal beforehand and too late to make it sensible to stay on at school without some thought of supper, and when Emily Vinson issued through her husband an invitation to both Vera and me to have coffee and sandwiches at six o'clock it seemed sensible to accept.

Admittedly, Vinson made it plain that the idea was his wife's. He seemed mildly surprised that she should wish to entertain us so briefly—insist on entertaining us was the expression he used. Vinson himself wasn't involved with the play. He never grudged spend-

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ing his private time to give extra tuition in his own subject but made it a matter of rigid policy never to become involved in what he described as extra-mural divertissements appealing only to the regressed adolescent. He was, however, a keen chess player and on Wednesday evenings spent the three hours from nine until midnight at the local chess club of which he was secretary. He was a man of meticulous habit and any school activity on a Wednesday evening would, in any case, have had to manage without him.

Every detail, every word spoken at that brief and unremarkable meal—dry ham sandwiches cut too thick and synthetic coffee—was recounted by Vera and me at the Crown Court so that it has always intrigued me that I can no longer visualize the scene. I know exactly what happened, of course. I can recount every word. It's just that I can no longer shut my eyes and see the supper table, the four of us seated there, imprinted in colors on the mind's eye. Vera and I said at the trial that both Vinsons seemed more than usually ill at ease, that Harold in particular gave us the impression that he wished we weren't there. But that could have been hindsight.

The vital incident, if you can call it that, happened toward the end of the meal. It was so very ordinary at the time, so crucial in retrospect. Emily Vinson, as if uneasily aware of her duties as hostess and of the unaccountable silence which had fallen on the table, made a palpable effort. Looking up with a nervous glance at her husband she said:

"Two such very nice and polite workmen came this morning—"

Vinson touched his lips with his paper serviette, then crumpled it convulsively. His voice was unusually sharp as he broke in: "Emily my dear, do you think you could spare us the details of your domestic routine this evening? I've had a particularly tiring day. And I am trying to concentrate my mind on this evening's game." And that was all.

The dress rehearsal was over at about nine o'clock, as planned, and I told Vera that I had left a library book at the Vinsons' and was anxious to pick it up on the way home. She made no objection. She gave the impression, poor girl, that she was never particularly anxious to get home.

It was only a quarter of an hour's brisk walk to the house and, when we arrived, we saw at once that something was wrong. There were two cars, one with a blue light on the roof, and an ambulance parked unobtrusively but unmistakably at the side of the house.

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Vera and I glanced briefly at each other, then ran to the front door. It was shut.

Without ringing, we dashed round to the side. The back door, leading to the kitchen quarters, was open. I had an immediate impression that the house was peopled with large men, two of them were in uniform. There was, I remember, a policewoman bending over the prone figure of Emily Vinson. And their cleaning woman, Mrs. Wilcox, was there, too. I heard Vera explaining to a plainclothes policeman, obviously the senior man present, that we were friends of the Vinsons and that we had been there to supper only that evening.

"What's happened?" she kept asking. "What's happened?"

Before the police could answer, Mrs. Wilcox was spitting it all out, eyes bright with self-important outrage and excitement. I sensed that the police wanted to get rid of her, but she wasn't so easily dislodged. And, after all, she had been first on the scene. She knew it all. I heard it in a series of disjointed sentences:

"Knocked on the head—terrible bruise—marks all over the parquet flooring where he dragged her—only just coming round now—human fiend—head resting on a cushion in the gas stove—the poor darling—came in just in time at nine-twenty—always come to watch color TV with her on Wednesday night—back door open as usual—found the note on the kitchen table."

The figure writhing on the floor, groaning and crying in a series of harsh grunting moans like an animal in travail, suddenly raised herself and spoke coherently. "I didn't write it! I didn't write it!"

"You mean Mr. Vinson tried to kill her?" Vera was incredulous, head turning from Mrs. Wilcox to the watchful, inscrutable faces of the police. The senior officer broke in:

"Now, Mrs. Wilcox, I think it's time you went home. The ambulance is here. An officer will come along for your statement later this evening. We'll look after Mrs. Vinson. There's nothing else for you to do." He turned to Vera and me. "If you were here earlier this evening, I'd like a word. We're fetching Mr. Vinson now from his chess club. But if you will both just wait in the sitting room, please—"

Vera said, "But if he knocked her unconscious and put her head in the gas oven, then why isn't she dead?"

It was Mrs. Wilcox who replied, turning triumphantly as she was led out. "The conversion, that's why. We're on natural gas from this morning. That North Sea stuff. It isn't poisonous. The two men from the Gas Board came just after nine o'clock."

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They were lifting Emily Vinson onto a stretcher now. Her voice came to us in a high querulous wail.

"I tried to tell him! You remember? You heard him? I tried to tell him!"

The suicide note was one of the exhibits at Vinson's trial. A document examiner from the forensic-science laboratory testified that it was a forgery, a clever forgery but not Mrs. Vinson's writing. He couldn't give an opinion on whether it was the work of the husband, although it was certainly written on a page taken from a writing pad found in the desk in the sitting room. It bore no resemblance to the accused's normal writing. But, in his view, it hadn't been written by Mrs. Vinson. He gave a number of technical reasons to support his view and the jury listened respectfully. But they weren't surprised. They knew that it hadn't been written by Mrs. Vinson. She had stood in the witness box and told them so. And they were perfectly clear in their own minds who had written it.

There was other forensic evidence. Mrs. Wilcox's "marks all over the parquet floor" were reduced to one long but shallow scrape just inside the sitting-room door. But it was a significant scrape. It had been made by the heels of Emily Vinson's shoes. Traces of the floor polish which she used were found, not on the soles but on the sides of the scraped heels, and there were minute traces of her shoe polish in the scrape.

The fingerprint officer gave evidence. I hadn't realized until then that fingerprint experts are mostly civilians. It must be a dull job, that constant and meticulous examination of surfaces for the telltale composites and whirls. Hard on the eyes, I should think. In this case, the significance was that he hadn't found any prints.

The gas taps had been wiped clean. I could see the jury physically perk up at the news. That was a mistake, all right. It didn't need the prosecution to point out that the taps should have shown Mrs. Vinson's prints. She, after all, had cooked their last meal. A cleverer murderer would merely have worn gloves, smudging any existing prints but ensuring that he left none of his own. It had been an overprecaution to wipe the gas taps clean.

Emily Vinson—quiet, distressed but gallant, obviously reluctant to testify against her husband—was remarkably competent in the witness box.

I hardly recognized her. No, she hadn't told her husband that she and Mrs. Wilcox had arranged to watch the television together

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shortly after nine o'clock. Mrs. Wilcox, who lived nearby, usually did come across to spend a couple of hours with her on Wednesday nights when Mr.Vinson was at his chess club. No, she hadn't liked to tell Mr. Vinson. Mr. Vinson wasn't very fond of inviting people in. The message came over to the jury as clearly as if she had spelt it out, the picture of a downtrodden, unintellectual wife craving the human companionship which her husband denied her, guiltily watching a popular TV show with her cleaning woman at a time when she would be certain that her husband wouldn't catch them out. I glanced at his proud, unyielding mask, at the hands clutched over the edge of the dock, and imagined what he was thinking, what he would have said.

"Surely you have enough of domestic trivia and Mrs. Wilcox's conversation, hardly exciting I should have thought, without inviting her into your drawing room. The woman should know her place."

The trial didn't take long. Vinson made no defense except to reiterate stubbornly, eyes fixed straight ahead, that he hadn't done it. His counsel did his best, but with the dogged persistence of a man resigned to failure, and the jury had the look of people glad to be faced, for once, with a clear-cut case they could actually understand. The verdict was inevitable. And the subsequent divorce hearing was even shorter. It isn't difficult to persuade a judge that your marriage has irretrievably broken down when your husband is serving a prison sentence for attempted murder.

Two months after the decree absolute, we married and I took over the Georgian house, the river view, the Regency furniture. With the physical possessions, I knew exactly what I was getting. With my wife, I wasn't so sure. There had been something disturbing, even a little frightening, about the competence with which she had carried out my instructions.

It hadn't, of course, been particularly difficult. We had planned it together during those sessions when I was painting her portrait. I had written and handed her the fake suicide note on the paper she had supplied a few days before our plans matured. We knew when the gas was due to be converted. She had, as instructed, placed the note on the kitchen table before scraping the heels of her shoes across the polished floor. She had even managed beautifully the only tricky part, to bang the back of her head sufficiently hard against the kitchen wall to raise an impressive bruise but not sufficiently hard to risk bungling the final preparations—the cushion placed in

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the bottom of the oven for the head, the gas tap turned on and then wiped clean with her handkerchief.

And who could have imagined that she was such a consummate actress? Sometimes, remembering that anguished animal cry of "I tried to tell him! I tried to tell him!" I wonder again what is going on behind those remarkable eyes. She still acts, of course. I find it remarkably irritating, that habit she has, particularly when we are in company, of turning on me that meek, supplicating, beaten-dog expression whenever I talk to her. It provokes unkindness. Perhaps it's intended to. I'm afraid I'm beginning to get rather a reputation for sadism. People don't seem to want to come to the house any more.

There is one solution, of course, and I can't pretend that I haven't pondered it. A man who has killed another merely to get his house isn't likely to be too fastidious about killing again. And it was murder—I have to accept that.

Vinson served only nine months of his sentence before dying in the prison hospital of what should have been an uncomplicated attack of influenza. Perhaps his job really was his life and without his precious alumni the will to live snapped. Or perhaps he didn't choose to live with the memory of his wife's great betrayal. Beneath the petty tyranny, the impatience, the acerbity, there may have been love of a kind.

But the ultimate solution is barred to me. A month ago, Emily explained, meekly, like a child propounding a problem, and with a swift sidelong glance, that she had written a confession and left it with her solicitor. "Just in case anything happens to me, darling."

She explained that what we did to poor Harold is preying on her mind but that she feels better now that all the details are written down and she can be sure that, after her death, the truth will at last be known and Harold's memory cleared. She couldn't have made it more plain to me that it is in my interest to see that I die first.

I killed Harold Vinson to get the house; Emily to get me. On the whole, she made the better bargain. In a few weeks I shall lose the house. Emily is selling it. After all, there's nothing I can do to stop her—the place belongs to her, not me.

After we married, I gave up the teaching post, finding it embarrassing to meet my colleagues as Emily's husband. It was not that anyone suspected. Why should they? I had a perfect alibi for the time of the crime. But I had a dream that, living in that perfection, I might become a painter after all. That was the greatest illusion of all.

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So now they are taking down from the end of the drive the board which states THIS DESIRABLE RESIDENCE FOR SALE. Emily got a very good price for the house and the furniture. More than enough to buy the small but pretentious brick box on an executive estate in North London which will be my cage from now on. Everything is sold. We're taking nothing with us except the gas stove. But, as Emily pointed out when I remonstrated, why not? It's in perfectly good working order.

DETECTIVERSE

MAKING HER MARK

by GLORIA ROSENTHAL

The murderer left lots of clues—
A footprint made with muddy shoes,
A bloody handprint on the wall,
A dirty sweater in the hall,
A lipstick smear on coffee mug,
A perfume stain on chair and rug.
They collared her that very day,
Which proved, again, grime doesn't pay.

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a *NEW* short story by

ROBERT BARNARD

Maria Ferneyhough decided to move. What chance was there of a successful (in her terms) third marriage with whispers like this going around respectable Eastbourne society? She fixed on Scarborough, which had many features in common with Eastbourne—notably an aging, mainly retired population—but drew its residents from an entirely different part of the country.

A sparkling addition to his exciting and versatile achievement in short stories by Robert Barnard, whose latest novel from Scribners, A City of Strangers, *won high praise from* The New York Times . . .

THE HABIT OF WIDOWHOOD

by ROBERT BARNARD

When my great-great-grandmother married her first husband in 1867, the felicitations on the event from the burghers of Eastbourne were unfeigned. People were used at that time to unions between elderly men and young women, and viewed them in a light rather different from that in which they would be seen today. "Everyone v. kind," she noted in her diary. This diary was entrusted to me by my grandmother (who was "Australian respectability" personified) with a meaningful glance and instructions that it was For My Eyes Only. I am a crime writer, one of Australia's suprisingly few, and she knew it would interest me. When my great-great-grandmother's first husband died, six weeks after marriage, people were also kind: the Victorians had a great range of euphemisms to cover procreation, childbirth, and dying, and the most common one used about his death was that it was difficult at his age to keep up with a young wife. My great-great-grandmother noted this down in her

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diary, and rather gave the game away by adding an exclamation mark.

For the diary, though usually brief, is unusually honest. Ten days before his death, she had noted in that diary: "Talked to Ernest of s. bliss. V. interested." A week before his death we read: "S. bliss. Ernest *v.* excited." And on the day of his death: "E. died after s.b." Modesty forbids that I speculate on the precise nature of "s. bliss." I take it to be either secret or supreme bliss. Anyway, whatever it was, it did for poor old Ernest.

So there was Maria Halliwell, nee Chalmers, a widow and comfortably off. People said (she noted in her diary) that if she should be in an interesting condition, it was a comfort that she would be well provided for. Others said that no doubt after a suitable interval she would find a husband more her own age. But Maria was not pregnant, and after ten months of widowhood she married Charlie Ferneyhough, a respectable haberdasher, who at sixty-eight was no nearer her own age than her first.

This time I get hints from the diary that comment was less kind. What seemed prudent when done once began to seem mercenary when done a second time. She records (again with that exclamation mark!) that he was advised by his friends not to overdo things, to go steady, and so on. Such well meaning advice met with its usual response. Three months after leading Maria down the aisle of All Saints Church, Charlie Ferneyhough was a dead man.

This time comment was far from kind. I do not know which well meaning friend retailed it to her, but it is all there in the diary. Some ladies said there should be an autopsy, others said darkly that *that* wouldn't reveal anything. Both sexes pointed out that in the cases of her first and her second husband the doctor had been summoned around eleven o'clock at night. They also pointed out that both husbands had a history of heart trouble. Oh no, they said, an autopsy wouldn't reveal anything criminal.

Maria Ferneyhough decided to move. What chance was there of a successful (in her terms) third marriage with whispers like this going around respectable Eastbourne society? She fixed on Scarborough, which had many features in common with Eastbourne —notably an aging, mainly retired population—but drew its residents from an entirely different part of the country.

Maria's third marriage, to Stanley Stalleybrass, was her longest—it lasted all of fifteen months. Clearly a diet of meat puddings and plum duffs and beer had not destroyed the man's hardy York-

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shire constitution. He had owned a smelting works near Barnsley, had sold up after his wife had died and moved to the coast. Maria recorded that he was "v. bored." Not for long. It would be prurient to count the number of "s. blisses" recorded in the diary after their marriage, but they certainly are frequent. It was, one feels, with a certain relief that Maria records in May 1872: "Stanley expired (after s.b.!). V. happy." I am not entirely clear whether this last comment refers to herself or to Stanley.

It would be tedious to follow Maria around for the next years of her life, for the details of her marriages as recorded in the diary are essentially similar to those which (against all the wishes of my dear grandmother) I have just recounted. She never again married two husbands in the same town, and this, I think, was prudent: though (to my knowledge) nothing criminal was ever involved, still there was a danger of her reputation preceding her on her travels, which in fact it never did.

Also it meant she could remarry quicker. So the decade saw her moving herself and her more and more extensive belongings to Aberdeen, St. Anne's, Leamington Spa, Edinburgh, Torquay, and St. Davids, becoming successively (and after elaborate legal settlements enabling her to keep control of her fortune) Mrs. Hamish McGregor, Mrs. Alfred Dunn, Mrs. James Cadogan, Mrs. Iain MacPherson, Mrs. Lionel Blount, and Mrs. Owen Thomas. The marriages lasted various lengths of time: that to James Cadogan, for example, was over by the first night, and the diary does not record that "s.b." was involved. All the other husbands were initiated into that terrible delight, and all paid the price for it.

It was in St. Davids, that sleepy Welsh cathedral village, that Maria Thomas, as she then was, met Mr. Julius Kirkpatrick. She was very recently widowed—a condition as regular with her as a summer cold—and preparing to up sticks and find fresh woods and pastures new. Not to mention, of course, elderly lambs to be led to the slaughter. She met Mr. Kirkpatrick, she records, in the chilly, underpopulated cathedral, after Sunday service. He was, he told her, still mourning the death of his wife the previous year, and he had come to St. Davids for the loneliness of its situation, and the healthy beauty of its walks, which he hoped would add tone to his system, which had been sadly weakened by grief and a series of minor heart attacks.

He was there and then invited back to Maria's substantial home

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on the Square. The entries at this point in her diary were becoming longer and more revealing (she later wrote several stories of a sentimental nature for women's magazines, so perhaps it is from her that I get my bent for fiction). She records that he was "v. agreeable and well informed. Knows Edinburgh well, and Leamington Spa. Says he is 61 but looks yngr. Shall pursue the matter no further *here.*"

The fact was that the advent in her life of Mr. Julius Kirkpatrick was an inconvenience to my great-great-grandmother's plans. She had already decided to take a cruise to Italy. One week before meeting him, she had booked her passage to Naples on an India-bound steamship, which was to depart from Southampton at the beginning of March and would call at Le Havre, Marseilles, Lisbon, and Genoa before arriving in Naples.

Maria's plans were for one month in the Italian South: she had booked a hotel for part of that time in Amalfi and had reserved her return passage on another boat that did the India run for late April 1882. Clearly, Mr. Kirkpatrick was a prospect, but no more than that. He was not to be allowed to come in the way of present happiness.

She had reckoned without the man himself. After two days at the Great Western Hotel in London ("Clothes" underlined several times in the diary), she proceeded to Southampton and on board the *Duke of Albany,* where she found Mr. Kirkpatrick (underlined, with several exclamation marks after it in the diary) already ensconced. They had met perhaps four or five times in her last days in St. Davids, but apparently she had him interested—so enthralled, in fact, that he had decided to pursue her.

At the various stops we have "Le Havre with Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Conway, and Mr. Kirkpatrick." At Marseilles she went ashore with only Mrs. Conway and Mr. Kirkpatrick. By Lisbon she and he were alone. By Naples, their friendship was a well established thing. He went with her to Pompeii and bought her several of the classical-headed trinkets that were the tourist fodder of the time. (I have inherited a bracelet that I think must be one of these very trinkets.) He escorted her up Vesuvius ("Mr. Kirkpatrick's strong arm to assist me") and even helped her choose hats and shoes. He stayed in another hotel in Amalfi while she was there, escorted her on a brief trip to Rome, and again on a weekend visit to Sicily. Clearly the friendship was more than firm, though it seems nothing was said about marriage until they were on the boat home . . .

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There are elements in Maria's diary account of her Italian trip that I confess would have made me suspicious—but then I am a crime writer, and congenitally suspicious. The fact that Maria herself was not may be due to the fact that she was genuinely attracted to Julius Kirkpatrick. Maybe her adventurous spirit recognized its fellow. At any rate, when he proposed, the second night out of Naples, she accepted immediately—"v. happy"—and they were married four nights later in Spanish waters by the captain of the *Lahore*, the boat which they had taken, in accordance with Maria's original plans. Several times in the days that follow, she records that she is "v. happy," and she describes as "enchanting" the days they spent in Lisbon and the French ports. One might almost think that her rocky marital career was over were it not that, in French waters, she recorded: "Talked to J. of s. bliss. Not v. interested."

The diary records many sayings of Julius, lists things bought, notes dinings at the captain's table and suchlike commonplaces of shipboard life until at last they docked, traveled by train to London, and settled themselves into a suite at the Great Western, intending, according to the diary, to enjoy a week in London before traveling to settle up their affairs in Pembrokeshire, though she also records that Julius was "much plagued by business matters that he is forced to attend to."

The end came three days after their return to those shores, and thanks to the fullness of the account in the diary I can perhaps exercise such fictional powers as I possess and describe the scene more fully than hitherto.

It began soon after breakfast, and it was sparked off, appropriately enough, by a further reference to "s. bliss." I imagine Maria coming up behind Julius as he sat at table in their suite reading the *Daily Telegraph* (he was not a man of much education) and putting her arms around him and kissing him on the cheek.

"Is my Julius happy?"

"Deliriously happy, my dear."

"Has he everything he could wish for?"

"Very nearly everything, my dear."

"What more could he possibly want? Was he thinking of that supreme bliss that I promised to reveal to him one day?"

Mr. Kirkpatrick smiled secretively.

"No, my dear," he said, folding his paper and setting it beside his plate. "It was not that supreme bliss that you spoke to me of. In fact,

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I'm afraid that the rapture Mr. Thomas and Mr. MacPherson enjoyed is not destined to fall to my lot."

Maria should have known then that the game was up. She had admitted to being twice widowed, but Mr. MacPherson's was not one of the names she had mentioned.

"Perhaps you are wise, my dear—with your heart."

"It should really have occurred to you, Maria, that a man with a weak heart does not climb Vesuvius. A weak heart would have been a severe handicap to me in my work as a private enquiry agent."

"Enquiry agent?" Maria's voice faltered.

"In vulgar parlance, a detective. One of my most interesting assignments over the past two years has been to follow you in your enterprising marital career."

"Why should you—?"

"The family of the late Iain MacPherson, of Edinburgh, engaged me. The Scots, to their credit, are a suspicious race of people, and they don't take kindly to being disinherited in favor of a young wife, come from nowhere, disappearing to nowhere."

Maria's jaw set obstinately. "I've done nothing criminal."

"Quite right, my dear. And after lengthy—and somewhat costly—investigations, that was the conclusion I was forced to report back to them. I trust they felt in some small way compensated for their expenses by the fact that the report made most interesting reading. Sad—or perhaps in one way most fortunate—that it would not be considered suitable reading for the ladies."

"When did you make this report?"

"Shortly before coming to make your acquaintance in St. Davids."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, I'm not going to indulge in any sessions designed to produce supreme bliss, that's a certainty. But you ask the wrong question, my dear. I am going to do nothing. The question is, what are you going to do?"

She drew herself up and looked him straight in the eye, as if declaring battle.

"*I?*"

"You can hardly imagine that I would sleep easy living with a woman with such a marital history? If you have done nothing criminal as yet, still your career has strayed so breathtakingly close to the borderline that clearly you would cross it the moment you thought it would suit your purposes to do so. The question is, then, where are you to go?"

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"*I* to go? I should have thought—"

"I fear that in this case you have not thought nearly enough, my dear. I have already wired Davies, the lawyer in St. Davids, that the house there is to be sealed. I know you have bank accounts both in London and St. Davids, and I have sent my lawyers on to make sure you are refused access to these. There you may see the beauty of our romantic shipboard marriage, my dear. You were unable to consult with lawyers and to arrange the usual settlements and jointures."

"But there's protection now for married women! Protection against men like you!"

"Ah, you refer to the Married Women's Property Act—if I may say so a wise and long-overdue measure. This is a milestone year for the female sex. No doubt you followed the debates and the newspaper discussions with interest. Alas, those were but debates, were but discussions. Unfortunately—and this really *is* unfortunate for you—the bill has not yet become law, is not expected to receive royal assent until the summer. Your property, my dear, is mine and mine alone."

"This is monstrous!"

"You see now the urgency as well as the cunning of my plan. But I am not an unreasonable person. Legally, you may have claim to little more than the clothes you stand up in. Upon compassionate grounds, I will certainly allow you to take all your clothes and personal effects—jewellery and suchlike things. Pity you always went for money in the bank rather than portable property, don't you think? But I'll be generous: I'll add a sum of ready money. Shall we say five hundred pounds? Yes, I think that would do nicely. Five hundred pounds—on condition that you do the one thing that will make my present happiness complete: remove yourself and all trace of you from this hotel by nightfall."

I do not know how long my great-great-grandmother stormed, fumed, counter-attacked, protested, pleaded, but I do know she was out of that hotel by nightfall. And I do know that before many weeks had passed she was on the boat to Australia—no doubt feeling that only such a place was sufficiently remote for her to resume her career without the attentions of Mr. Kirkpatrick spoiling her schemes.

It was a mistaken choice. Australia was then still a young country, a country of young men making their fortunes. Old men who had

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made theirs were not thick on the ground, as they were in the seaside and spa towns of Great Britain. But my great-great-grandmother was a great believer in the institution of marriage and had never found it wanting. Within a year of landing, she had married (with what legality it is perhaps best not to inquire) George Atherton, an ironmonger of Sydney two years younger than herself, a vigorous man, by all accounts, and one who could stand any amount of supreme bliss. Though by then she was in her later thirties, she soon produced two sons, and thus established the line of Athertons who have figured prominently in the history of New South Wales and Australia. It was a transformation into respectability, into social prominence, that was remarkable even by Australian standards.

But there is one more fact about my great-great-grandmother Maria Atherton, and I record it without comment. Though the Athertons were moderately prosperous, their place in the Sydneyocracy was gained after she received a legacy of seventy thousand pounds, a great sum in those days, from a retired New England grazier. The will paid tribute to her as one of the most remarkable women in Sydney, and added that she had made an old man very happy.

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

WHAT GOES AROUND

by LOU PICIULLO

He liked to enter houses,
He liked to dress in black,
He'd sneak up on his victims
And stab them in the back
'Til one night when he rose from bed
To calm his squeaking pup
And didn't hear the man in black
Behind him, sneaking up.

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a *NEW* short story by

JEFFRY SCOTT

Sergeant Di Barroclough was staring in open incredulity. "I know you're a stuffy mortal," she told Will, who was temporarily manning the guest-house reception desk, "but can't you think of a good reason for a guy booking in under a false name? I hate to shock you, but a rather shifty Mrs. Longfellow will arrive any moment now, with minimum luggage and a burning wish for an early night. Get the picture?"

This is Jeffry Scott's forty-sixth story in EQMM since his first appearance in the magazine in 1973. During all of which time he's also found time to master a versatile and full-time career as a London newspaperman under his real name, Shaun Usher . . .

UNWELCOME GUEST

by JEFFRY SCOTT

The name clinched it for Will Tunstall. The name the stranger claimed, and the manner in which it was supplied.

"Longfellow," Will repeated flatly, having spun the register round.

The newcomer grinned unkindly. "Suits me, eh?" And, yes, besides being ugly, the alleged Longfellow *was* tall, six-four at least. "Now if the chat show is finished, I'll have a wash and brush-up before dinner." His voice, graceless and tough as the rest of him, rang with insolence. "I've had less hassle getting into countries, squire, let alone a no-stars hotel at the back o' beyond."

Will Tunstall didn't like it a bit. He was good at that—fussing over things, wanting to know more. He was unaware of this trait, while noticing that many folk were tetchy with him for what struck him as insufficient reasons.

But for the moment, he was unworried by his inability to make

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friends. That name nagged at him. Not to mention the business about Room 5 having a sea view. And then there was the matter of the shoes that hadn't barked. Will Tunstall read and relished his way through the complete Sherlock Holmes treasury every five years or so. Those shoes seemed highly significant.

He knew that he might be making a fuss over nothing, or extremely little. The White Hart in Dorrington, whose reception desk he was ruling for a week or two, wasn't the most formal of hotels. Even the reception desk was nothing of the kind, but a handsome if battered Regency table set slantwise in the hall of what had been a Georgian merchant's home. The White Hart was a superior guesthouse, really. Days might pass before a patron was asked to sign in because Helen Waits, who owned the place, had used the register to wedge the shortest leg of a rocking table or otherwise mislaid the thing.

But the Widow Waits was on her annual package holiday in Cyprus, this being autumn when trade was slack. Her brother had taken time off to cover for her. Will Tunstall never mislaid stuff, and always went by the book. Or, in this case, hotel register.

Frowning at Longfellow's autograph, he tracked the newcomer's progress by the soft creak of floorboards overhead and then a muffled slam—Bedroom 5's door opened easily, yet had to be shut with vigor. Only then did Will ring Di Barroclough and ask her to drop in for a drink on her way home from work.

He assured himself that Longfellow wasn't a pretext to see Di again. The thought made him smile a trifle grimly. Ms. Barroclough's company could be a mixed pleasure. For some reason she found him—well, amusing, he supposed. When he had been introduced to Di and explained what he did for a living, her instant retort had been, "An actuary—aren't they guys who pass their accountancy exams but consider all that a bit too rich for their blood?"

"I've never seen it in that light," he had responded, taking the wisecrack at face value, and her giggle nonplused him. Remembering the moment, Will sighed dolefully. Just his luck to fall for a woman who happened to be pretty certain he was a pompous nerd.

Di Barroclough didn't look like a CID sergeant. She looked, Will Tunstall admitted grudgingly, like an attractive woman coming in out of the October night with crystals of rain glittering on sleek hair the color of Indian ink. Her jeans were second-skin snug on long legs. A canary-yellow sweater and car coat a shade darker completed

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her rig. He wished that she had been in uniform, to remind him that, in common with most intensely law-abiding citizens who resent occasional speeding fines and parking tickets, he wasn't above half keen on police officers. But then Di was a detective-sergeant and they didn't go in for uniforms.

Five minutes later, Sergeant Barroclough was staring in open incredulity. "I know you're a stuffy mortal, but can't you think of a good reason for a guy booking in under a false name? I hate to shock you, but a rather shifty Mrs. Longfellow will arrive any moment now, with minimum luggage and a burning wish for an early night. Get the picture?"

"Number 5 is a single room. He's not here for an assignation."

The Victorian phrase made Di's geranium-red lips quiver at the corners, but before she could jeer he hurried on. "And if this is his first time here, as he said, why did Longfellow specify Room 5 because it's the one with the best sea view? How would he know?"

They were sitting in Will's office—his sister's, rather—a friendly room off the main hall, only a filing cabinet and some catering-wholesalers' calendars signaling its business side.

Sergeant Barroclough swirled her glass of Campari and soda and suggested, "Somebody told him. Recommended the White Hart—said that room had a nice view."

"The view he's used to is through bars," Will said darkly. "The man's a villain, I could tell at a glance."

"From your vast experience," she commented, deadpan.

"He tried to ignore the register and breeze straight up to his room. I wasn't having any of that. So he stood there, making it blatantly obvious he was inventing a name, and put down Longfellow. I asked if he had a car. No, he'd just walked up from the station. But his shoes were pristine. I was at the station half an hour earlier, picking up an evening paper, and ruined a good pair of suede shoes. They're resurfacing at the front there, it's an inch deep in mud! That liar hadn't walked more than a few yards. And it was raining again, but his clothes were bone dry. He came in a car, all right."

"Taxi." The policewoman was laconic. "Shiny black thing, light on the roof. Lots of them at the railway station. He took a cab, you chump." Guessing his objection, she went on, "Heaven knows why, but he got this impression that you're a busybody, and said he walked to shut you up and avoid the rest of Twenty Questions."

Will was silent for a while. "You think I ought to be running Fawlty Towers, not the White Hart."

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Di choked on her drink. "Steady on, I'll be suspecting you of a sense of humor next."

"You also think I'm a bore."

She gave him an unreadable glance. "There you go, conducting both halves of the conversation all on your own. You're an actuary, Will, not a ventriloquist."

Startled, he wondered why she'd turned so snappy. "Stay to dinner, anyway. Longfellow's going to eat in—you can see for yourself that he's a wrong 'un."

"Give over, dear. Genuine wrong 'uns rarely look the part."

"This one does. It's written all over him."

"Whatever you say, Mr. Holmes." She finished her Campari. "Lead on. I'm starving."

Will felt a surge of happiness, waving her ahead of him into the dining room. He was guaranteed another hour or so with her. He was admiring, in what he would have sworn was a non-sexist manner, the whole look of her and, like the lady, he was ready for dinner. And quite grateful to so-called Longfellow for being a suspicious character.

The White Hart's dining room had been the merchant's modest ballroom. A false ceiling and crimson drapes drawn across tall windows facing the sea, along with discreet lighting and candles in glass globes on every table, transformed the space.

A pug-nosed young man with freckles, a certain Terry Dando, had the smallest table near the door. After appreciative inspection of Di Barroclough, who ignored him, he winked at Will. "When the boss comes hurrying in, it sharpens my appetite." Will gathered that Dando was among the absent Mrs. Waits' recently recruited regulars, a computer consultant serving factories in the area. Dando had told him that he always tried to stay at the White Hart.

Regulars, Mrs. Waits had impressed on her brother while briefing him before heading off to the airport, were VIPs—potential jam on her bread and butter. So Will paused to play the suave hotelier. "You won't be disappointed. Chef has been on a winning streak lately." He wondered whether that put him in breach of the Trade Descriptions Act: Chef was a nineteen-year-old unmarried mother called Marlene Ruddock, who managed to turn out quite acceptable dishes one-handed, with a whinily unattractive baby apparently grafted to her left hip. Will had hung about the kitchen for the better

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part of an hour once, to confirm that the infant could be put down in an emergency.

Joining Di Barroclough, he explained about Dando. Trixie, who despite the frivolous name was an oxlike matriarch, making her sizeable, frilly white apron more of a bib, brought them potted shrimps and a melon boat respectively.

They were attending to pepper steak and fresh, locally grown vegetables when Will muttered, "Here he comes—don't look round."

"I'd never have thought of that, thanks for warning me." Sergeant Barroclough leaned sideways, opening the nearest curtain a couple of inches to stare out at the night. Belatedly, he realized that she was using the windowpane as a mirror.

When she let the curtain whisper back to blank out the reflection, Di was in what Will had learned to label her Cheshire Cat mode —disturbingly broad smile implicit with mockery. "What?" he demanded uneasily.

"Don't be so defensive. You were right—Longfellow isn't what he seems. *There's* a man who has been mixed up with no end of crime in his time." But she carried on with her meal and her next comment concerned the wine.

"Er, shouldn't we call the police?"

"I'm it, dumbo." She patted his hand. "Sorry, but you know what I mean. He's getting outside Dover sole with a double helping of fried potatoes—this is somebody unlikely to run amok in the next half hour." Her tone was abstracted.

Then suddenly she rose. "Got to go to the girls' room. Look, just sit tight. Try not to stare at him all the time, that'd be good. You're sort of feeling around blindly with your fork and doing an impression of a devoted gun-dog pointing his nose at the prey. Our Mr. Longfellow's not a serious problem—probably no problem at all."

"I'm sorry." Will was offended.

She leaned closer for an instant, sharing perfume at once spiced and floral, wine on her breath. "You're beautiful when you're mad, honey. Don't go anywhere, all right?"

Will finished his steak—excellent sauce, Marlene had outdone herself—without tasting another bite. The excellent Dr. Freud, he lectured himself smugly, had argued that there is no such thing as a joke. Behind Di's jibe had been (hadn't there? come on, sure there had) a wisp of genuine affection.

Even actuaries may daydream, and actuaries moonlighting as hotel proprietors are notoriously prone to romantic fantasies. Will

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had just worked out prudent financial arrangements for Mr. and Mrs. Tunstall's first house when he decided that another glass of burgundy was indicated.

At which point he got an unpleasant shock.

Longfellow's table was empty. Half a Dover sole and a minor Everest of french fries marked a hurried departure. Will started to his feet, drawing a mildly puzzled glance from Terry Dando, and went off to find Di. Which led to a discovery making the other one minor by comparison.

Sergeant Barroclough's butter-colored coat was still on its peg near the reception desk, but so far as Will could discover neither she nor Longfellow remained in the White Hart. During his third, quietly frantic sweep of the place, Will noticed that something else was missing. Somebody had taken the register from his desk.

"Hey, it has to be the most infuriating quote in the book—but don't worry, there's always a perfectly simple explanation." Terry Dando poured quite a lot of Scotch, shunning the water jug. "Have a drink," he urged.

Young Dando had found Will pacing the hall and led him into The Den. The White Hart had no bar as such. Guests served themselves in this little room on the first floor. It worked on an honor system, surprisingly effective. Now Dando was going back to the sideboard to note what he had taken on a clipboard with a pen on a cord.

Turning the glass in his fingers, Will muttered "Thanks, but I'd better keep a clear head."

"Maybe she went out for a breath of air." It was the second time Dando had advanced the unlikely theory.

"Hardly. It was raining hard when she left the room—I heard it while we were eating. And her coat's still here. Di would have put it on. She'd have gotten soaked otherwise."

Terry checked that they were alone in The Den. He rubbed his chin: "Look, no offense—you two seemed to be getting on fine—but then she suddenly upped and left. Eh? Happens to us all—bird takes something the wrong way, storms off. Send her flowers in the morning. Or chalk it up to experience."

Will shook his head impatiently. "Forget that. Di's a policewoman."

Dando cursed explosively, "She's *what?*"

"She's our local CID sergeant—I thought you knew. Di's a friend of my sister's."

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Dando stared at him for an instant. "Helen introduced us, but she never mentioned the copper part." He smiled ruefully.

Part of Will Tunstall's mind, that small portion free of worry, informed him that Dando could be a pain for all his good intentions.

"Well, she's not on duty tonight surely? So it can't be, like, work-related—anything *sinister*."

Will mumbled, "I ought to be shot, wasting time like this. I must ring the police, start them looking for her."

"Bad idea! Think it through, mate. She's a career woman, right? My dad used to be a copper, so I know the ropes. She won't thank you for getting on the horn to her bosses over a spot of boy-friend trouble. Especially if she's gone home for a quiet evening in front of the telly."

"Get out of my way," Will said. "Di *was* working tonight! I called her in because of somebody acting suspiciously. For all I know—" He paused, uncomfortably aware of the other man's skeptical air. "I'm afraid Longfellow may have done something to her."

Dando, shaken out of light-heartedness, turned businesslike. "Longfellow's the tough customer who booked in tonight? I thought he looked dodgy. Right, I'll get the car out, see if I can spot him. Keys upstairs, and I'll need a coat. Back with you in a jiffy." He pelted away to his room.

Hurrying into the office, Will collided with the waitress, Trixie, waddling out. "No call to rush about," she grumbled, "I was just coming to fetch you. Phone call for you—they're hanging on."

He snatched the receiver off the blotter. "I can't talk, please hang up, I've got to—"

"Calm down, stop shouting. Listen to me. Don't say anything that might give the game away, somebody might hear. You needn't say anything, just hang up when I'm through. I'll be there in a minute or two and there may be a bit of a fuss. If so, as soon as it starts stand well back and keep the other guests away. Got that?"

Will felt dizzy with confusion and relief. Mainly relief.

For the caller, of course, had been Di Barroclough.

Trying to work out what was going on, Will cradled the phone and returned to the reception area.

Terry Dando joined him there, grim-faced, wearing a hip-length leather coat and carrying a torch. "Ready for anything," he announced tensely. "If Longfellow's skulking around, he should be easy

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to spot. I can go up and down the High Street, anyway, and by then the law should be here."

He was at the front door when Will remembered what Di had just told him. *"There may be a bit of a fuss."* Embarrassed, indecisive, he put out a hand. "Uh, hang on a sec, I'll come with you."

Dando didn't slacken his pace. "Don't be daft—stay by the phone in case she calls." The door, wheezing on its hydraulic buffer, began closing behind him.

Calling after Dando, Will yanked it open again. Windblown drizzle made him blink, but there was a full moon and the streetlamp beyond the hedge, plus the wall-mounted light aimed at the White Hart's sign, made it possible to see what was going on.

Terry Dando wasn't going anywhere—the "fuss," inadequate word, had started. He was struggling with a giant—Longfellow, who had been in ambush.

The sight triggered a shameful pang of dread in Will Tunstall. He hadn't raised a fist in anger since the age of ten. Fine, he was a coward, a perfectly reasonable thing to be—only sensible when you came right down to it.

This chattered through his mind between one step and the next. He flinched at the knowledge that what he most feared was public exposure of being afraid. And that meant he must help that bloody fool, Dando. And double damn *him* for a leap-before-looking macho posturer.

Terry Dando's fat torch sailed out of the melee and, turning end over end, seemed to take an age to hit the ground and bounce up again. Longfellow's apeman profile, teeth bright, showed as he threw his head back and clasped Dando in a bearhug.

Will was circling them timidly, looking for an arm or leg to grab, when somebody barged him aside. It was Di Barroclough, her sweater dark from rain. And then, as Will lost balance and started falling, he saw it: a gun barrel. Not the least like the symbols in the movies or the comic-book drawings of his youth—this was a greasy metal tube, sad brown instead of polished blue steel. A tool like any other, and that was a terrifying realization. His stomach went away, to be replaced by a melting snowball.

And without further thought or hesitation, Will Tunstall grabbed at the gun, got both hands around it, and jerked it savagely, blindly determined to gain possession. Then there was a horribly loud explosion, no pain but immense shock, a sense of simultaneously hang-

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ing above and diving into an orange-edged hoop of starkest black—no, a color beyond black, far more than black.

Will recovered instantly, scrabbling inside his skull for the crucial glimpse of colors hidden during normal life. Except, he started to understand, the recovery had taken far longer than he had assumed. For now it was daylight, a blustery, watery-bright morning, and he was in a hospital bed. With a pounding headache, a chemical reek in his mouth and lungs, and Di Barroclough, drawn and hollow-eyed, watching from a chair beside him.

"That was the bravest thing I ever hope to see. Also the bloody silliest." Her voice was tinny, as if heard over a bad phone line. Will resented her chuckle, but then he screwed up his eyes, learning that the chuckle had been a sob. She was crying. Too weak to move, he imagined reaching out and clasping her hand. Everything got better, and he went back to sleep.

"You misled me," Will Tunstall accused. Nearly a week had passed. He was still in hospital. The bullet had angled through his forearm and kept sufficient velocity to penetrate his leg and damage the bone. Daily physiotherapy sessions were making him peevish. ("Come on now, Mr. Tunstall, don't be such a baby, we don't want to be limping for the rest of our lives, do we?")

Detective-sergeant Barroclough had the grace to be sheepish. "I said Longfellow knew all about crime, which is true. He's an ex-policeman, went into private investigation when he finished his twelve years. I know him quite well. All right, I was teasing you. And trying to work out what he was up to, of course."

She hesitated, then shrugged defensively. "It was your own fault—the Longfellow stuff, I mean. As I'd guessed, Cyril Budgin, aka Longfellow, found you a bit of a pain, sweetheart. He wouldn't have given his correct name anyway, but the Longfellow thing was just to wind you up. You were right about his car, by the way. He had it tucked away nearby."

"I told you!"

"All right!" Di was silent for a moment. "I'm sorry for keeping you in the dark, but it seemed a bit of a joke at the time. Longfellow, as we'll go on calling him, was at the White Hart on a divorce job, waiting for a couple he expected to arrive later that night. Hence his insistence on Room 5. His client, the Angry Wife, had overheard her husband on the phone to his fancy woman, saying he'd booked Room 6 at the White Hart, Dorrington."

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Her laugh was edgy. "Don't feel bad about getting the wrong end of the stick. The entire night was a blasted carnival of cross-purposes and stupidity. I got it wrong, and so did Longfellow. No thanks to *us* that you came out alive."

Will sat up in bed painfully, and pleaded, "What the hell *was* going on then, Di?"

"I'll tell it in chronological order, or you'll lose your place. You blew the whistle on Longfellow. I recognized him over dinner and saw that it was mutual. Knowing he'd follow me if I gave him the high sign, I waited by the reception desk.

"Longfellow was delighted to find me at the Hart. He'd been chewing on more than the fish course and wanted official backup. Coming downstairs to the dining room, he'd glanced through the landing window and noticed a car tucked away under that lean-to affair in your parking lot. Awkward slot, but once in there a car is virtually hidden—except from that window. Now, Longfellow's retired only a year or so and he has plenty of police friends who pass on information. Cue for the next wrong-end-of-stick:

"He thought the car matched the description of one being used by The Bouncer."

Will protested. "Clear as mud."

"The Bouncer has been bouncing checks all over the southwest of England for the past couple of months," Di explained. "Tricky guy—he keeps nearly getting arrested but always slips away. Longfellow felt there was a good chance The Bouncer was staying at the White Hart, but hadn't a clue which guest he might be. All we know about The Bouncer is that he's youngish, personable, and was last seen driving a car identical to the one at the White Hart the other night. I slipped out to check the vehicle and it looked promising."

"You didn't take your coat, in that pouring rain," Will pointed out.

She blinked, started to say something withering, and changed it to a meeker, "I'm impulsive—sue me. Will, no law requires one to wrap up warm and dry. Want to hear this story or not?"

"Carry on."

"Thank you. We didn't want The Bouncer alarmed, now there was a shot at catching him off-guard. So I made Longfellow wait outside on the porch—he looks too much like a copper, to anyone except an innocent like you, to be anything else—and I hared away to the phone box at the corner. I couldn't use a hotel phone in case our target got the message. I rang in and told the duty officer to send

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the cavalry. The idea was to surround the place and sort out The Bouncer at our leisure."

Di shifted restlessly, making her plastic chair squeak. "Of course, the famous car in your parking lot wasn't The Bouncer's. But on my way back from looking at it, I did the obvious: checked the register where meticulous Mr. Tunstall puts guests' license numbers. The car belonged to chatty Terry Dando. You'd told me he was a regular, but when I flicked through the pages to the beginning of this year it emerged that there was no previous mention of the man. He'd conned you into accepting him as part of the human scenery—safe enough, your sister wasn't there to contradict him."

Flashing back to the struggle, Will broke in, "That was it! Just before I—got hurt—something seemed wrong. There was this tangle of arms and legs and cursing and kicking, and I touched the gun. Longfellow wasn't holding it. It was Dando."

"True." Di was subdued. "Dando's name isn't Dando. Aliases were in fashion that evening."

"He was The Bouncer," Will deduced.

Di's laced fingers tightened. "Of course he wasn't The Bouncer! Sorry, luv, I'm angry at me, not you. The man's a terrorist. Special Branch whisked Known-as-Dando back to their maximum-security interrogation center in London that same night. There's been a loud but busy silence ever since. So the odds are he's a big fish."

Studying her hands, she spoke almost inaudibly. "I feel rotten, Will. I was high on nailing a con man with no track record of violence. I thought he might put up a struggle when we collared him but the worst risk would be upsetting your guests. And all the time I was messing about with a lethal loony. Exposing you to him."

She shivered, hugging herself. "Cross-purposes and coincidences all the way. Longfellow turning up and jerking your chain so that you called me. Dando driving the same kind of car as The Bouncer."

Will had never seen her so displeased with herself. But he was genuinely curious, not changing the subject, in asking: "What made Dando go off the deep end that way?"

"Come on, sweetheart!" Di's shoulders sagged and she shook her head. "No, you really don't know. Dando thought he was undercover and suddenly you told him a copper had been at his elbow. Worse yet, from his viewpoint, said copper had done a runner, presumably to call up the troops. What's more, even if my slipping away was a false alarm, he knew you were determined to bring *more* police in. No wonder he ran for it. You did a terrific job of smoking him

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out—and the best of it was, you were genuine. Dando could tell you weren't playing games with him."

She prowled to the window and kept her back turned. "Rambo you ain't, sweetheart. What on earth possessed you to wade in like that when he had a gun?"

Possibly Will was still woozy from his medication. His answer came instantly, in surprise at the question's foolishness. "I didn't want you to get hurt."

Detective-sergeant Barroclough refused to turn. Eventually she snatched a tissue from her purse and blew her nose hard and noisily. When she did face him, it was with the oddest mixture of frustration and fondness. "What am I to do about you, Will?"

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. "You could marry me. Eventually, someday, maybe," he amended diffidently.

But it was a doomed effort, he believed. "Sorry, don't be offended. Forget what I said."

"You're doing both sides of the conversation again. Give a person the chance to say yes. Yes to thinking about it, don't rush out for the license."

Her eyes narrowed in thought. "We could settle for a little fling or a full-scale meaningless affair. But I suppose that's out of the question for an actuary."

"Absolutely," said Will Tunstall.

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

WAY TO GO

by SUSI TORRE-BUENO

A cad and a bounder named Rover
Made love to girls all the world over.
When he took him a wife,
He did not change his life
And to homicide, Rover, he drove 'er.

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a *NEW* short story by

RUTH RENDELL

Anna laid the cat's body on the roof of the coalshed. As she came back round the house, she saw a woman in the garden next door. This was a neat and tidy garden with flowers and a lawn. The woman was in her fifties, white-haired, slim, wearing a twin set. "One of the cats ran out in front of my car," Anna said. "I'm afraid it's dead."

Ruth Rendell has won, among other prestigious awards, Gold and Silver Daggers from England's Crime Writers Association and Edgars from the Mystery Writers of America, two for short stories which appeared first in EQMM. Her latest novel to be published in the U.S. is Going Wrong *(Mysterious). John Mortimer wrote of her in* The Sunday Times: *"If it weren't for a ridiculous literary snobbery about 'crime writing,' Ruth Rendell would be acclaimed as one of our most important novelists."*

But you know, we think she is *being so acclaimed . . .*

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN

by RUTH RENDELL

It was over in an instant. A flash of orange out of the green hedge, a streak across the road, a thud. The impact was felt as a surprisingly heavy jarring. There was no cry. Anna had braked, but too late and the car had been going fast. She pulled in to the side of the road, got out, walked back.

An effort was needed before she could look. The cat had been flung against the grass verge which separated road from narrow walkway. It was dead. She knew before she knelt down and felt its side that it was dead. A little blood came from its mouth. Its eyes were already

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glazing. It had been a fine cat of the kind called marmalade because the color is two-tone, the stripes like dark slices of peel among the clear orange. Paws, chest, and part of its face were white, the eyes gooseberry green.

It was an unfamiliar road, one she had only taken to avoid roadworks on the bridge. Anna thought, I was going too fast. There is no speed limit here but it's a country road with cottages and I shouldn't have been going so fast. The poor cat. Now she must go and admit what she had done, confront an angry or distressed owner, an owner who presumably lived in the house behind that hedge.

She opened the gate and went up the path. It was a cottage, but not a pretty one: of red brick with a low slate roof, bay windows downstairs with a green front door between them. In each bay window sat a cat, one black, one orange and white like the cat which had run in front of her car. They stared at her, unblinking, inscrutable, as if they did not see her, as if she was not there. She could still see the black one when she was at the front door. When she put her finger to the bell and rang it, the cat did not move, nor even blink its eyes.

No one came to the door. She rang the bell again. It occurred to her that the owner might be in the back garden and she walked round the side of the house. It wasn't really a garden but a wilderness of long grass and tall weeds and wild trees. There was no one. She looked through a window into a kitchen where a tortoiseshell cat sat on top of the fridge in the sphinx position and on the floor, on a strip of matting, a brown tabby rolled sensuously, its striped paws stroking the air.

There were no cats outside as far as she could see, not living ones at least. In the left-hand corner, past a kind of lean-to coalshed and a clump of bushes, three small wooden crosses were just visible among the long grass. Anna had no doubt they were cat graves.

She looked in her bag and, finding a hairdresser's appointment card, wrote on the blank back of it her name, her parents' address and their phone number, and added, *Your cat ran out in front of my car. I'm sorry, I'm sure death wds instantaneous.* Back at the front door, the black cat and the orange-and-white cat still staring out, she put the card through the letter box.

It was then that she looked in the window where the black cat was sitting. Inside was a small overfurnished living room which looked as if it smelt. Two cats lay on the hearthrug, two more were curled up together in an armchair. At either end of the mantelpiece

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sat a china cat, white and red with gilt whiskers. Anna thought there ought to have been another one between them, in the center of the shelf, because this was the only clear space in the room, every other corner and surface being crowded with objects, many of which had some association with the feline: cat ashtrays, cat vases, photographs of cats in silver frames, postcards of cats, mugs with cat faces on them, and ceramic, brass, silver, and glass kittens. Above the fireplace was a portrait of a marmalade-and-white cat done in oils and on the wall to the left hung a cat calendar.

Anna had an uneasy feeling that the cat in the portrait was the one that lay dead in the road. At any rate, it was very like. She could not leave the dead cat where it was. In the boot of her car were two plastic carrier bags, some sheets of newspaper, and a blanket she sometimes used for padding things she didn't want to strike against each other while she was driving. As wrapping for the cat's body, the plastic bags would look callous, the newspapers worse. She would sacrifice the blanket. It was a clean dark-blue blanket, single size, quite decent and decorous.

The cat's body wrapped in this blanket, she carried it up the path. The black cat had moved from the left-hand bay and had taken up a similar position in one of the upstairs windows. Anna took another look into the living room. A second examination of the portrait confirmed her guess that its subject was the one she was carrying. She backed away. The black cat stared down at her, turned its head, and yawned hugely. Of course it did not know she carried one of its companions, dead and now cold, wrapped in an old car blanket, having met a violent death. She had an uncomfortable feeling, a ridiculous feeling, that it would have behaved in precisely the same way if it had known.

She laid the cat's body on the roof of the coalshed. As she came back round the house, she saw a woman in the garden next door. This was a neat and tidy garden with flowers and a lawn. The woman was in her fifties, white-haired, slim, wearing a twin set.

"One of the cats ran out in front of my car," Anna said. "I'm afraid it's dead."

"Oh, dear."

"I've put the—body, the body on the coalshed. Do you know when they'll be back?"

"It's just her," the woman said. "It's just her on her own."

"Oh, well. I've written a note for her. With my name and address."

The woman was giving her an odd look. "You're very honest. Most

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would have just driven on. You don't have to report running over a cat, you know. It's not the same as a dog."

"I couldn't have just gone on."

"If I were you, I'd tear that note up. You can leave it to me, I'll tell her I saw you."

"I've already put it through the door," said Anna.

She said goodbye to the woman and got back into her car. She was on her way to her parents' house, where she would be staying for the next two weeks. Anna had a flat on the other side of the town, but she had promised to look after her parents' house while they were away on holiday, and—it now seemed a curious irony—her parents' cat.

If her journey had gone according to plan, if she had not been delayed for half an hour by the accident and the cat's death, she would have been in time to see her mother and father before they left for the airport. But when she got there, they had gone. On the hall table was a note for her in her mother's hand to say that they had had to leave, the cat had been fed, and there was a cold roast chicken in the fridge for Anna's supper. The cat would probably like some, too, to comfort it for missing them.

Anna did not think her mother's cat, a huge fluffy creature of a ghostly whitish-grey tabbyness named Griselda, was capable of missing anyone. She couldn't believe it had affections. It seemed to her without personality or charm, to lack endearing ways. To her knowledge, it had never uttered beyond giving an occasional thin squeak that signified hunger. It had never been known to rub its body against human legs, or even against the legs of the furniture. Anna knew that it was absurd to call an animal selfish—an animal naturally put its survival first, self-preservation being its prime instinct—yet she thought of Griselda as deeply, intensely, callously selfish. When it was not eating, it slept, and it slept in those most comfortable places where the people that owned it would have liked to sit but from which they could not bring themselves to dislodge it. At night it lay on their bed and, if they moved, dug its long sharp claws through the bedclothes into their legs.

Anna's mother didn't like hearing Griselda referred to as "it." She corrected Anna and stroked Griselda's head. Griselda, who purred a lot when recently fed and ensconced among cushions, always stopped purring at the touch of a human hand. This would have amused Anna if she had not seen that her mother seemed hurt by it, withdrew her hand and gave an unhappy little laugh.

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When she had unpacked the case she brought with her, had prepared and eaten her meal and given Griselda a chicken leg, she began to wonder if the owner of the cat she had run over would phone. The owner might feel, as people bereaved in great or small ways sometimes did feel, that nothing could bring back the dead. Discussion was useless, and so, certainly, was recrimination. It had not in fact been her fault. She had been driving fast, but not *illegally* fast, and even if she had been driving at thirty miles an hour she doubted if she could have avoided the cat which streaked so swiftly out of the hedge.

It would be better to stop thinking about it. A night's sleep, a day at work, and the memory of it would recede. She had done all she could. She was very glad she had not just driven on as the next-door neighbor had seemed to advocate. It had been some consolation to know that the woman had many cats, not just the one, so that perhaps losing one would be less of a blow.

When she had washed the dishes and phoned her friend Kate, wondered if Richard, the man who had taken her out three times and to whom she had given this number, would phone and had decided he would not, she sat down beside Griselda—not *with* Griselda but on the same sofa as she was on—and watched television. It got to ten and she thought it unlikely the cat woman—she had begun thinking of her as that—would phone now.

There was a phone extension in her parents' room but not in the spare room where she would be sleeping. It was nearly eleven-thirty and she was getting into bed when the phone rang. The chance of its being Richard, who was capable of phoning late, especially if he thought she was alone, made her go into her parents' bedroom and answer it.

A voice that sounded strange, thin, and cracked said what sounded like "Maria Yackle."

"Yes?" Anna said.

"This is Maria Yackle. It was my cat that you killed."

Anna swallowed. "Yes. I'm glad you found my note. I'm very sorry, I'm very sorry. It was an accident. The cat ran out in front of my car."

"You were going too fast."

It was a blunt statement, harshly made. Anna could not refute it. She said, "I'm very sorry about your cat."

"They don't go out much, they're happier indoors. It was a chance

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in a million. I should like to see you. I think you should make amends. It wouldn't be right for you just to get away with it."

Anna was very taken aback. Up till then the woman's remarks had seemed reasonable. She didn't know what to say.

"I think you should compensate me, don't you? I loved her, I love all my cats. I expect you thought that because I had so many cats it wouldn't hurt me so much to lose one."

That was so near what Anna had thought that she felt a kind of shock, as if this Maria Yackle or whatever she was called had read her mind. "I've told you I'm sorry. I am sorry, I was very upset, I *hated* it happening. I don't know what more I can say."

"We must meet."

"What would be the use of that?" Anna knew she sounded rude, but she was shaken by the woman's tone, her blunt, direct sentences.

There was a break in the voice, something very like a sob. "It would be of use to me."

The phone went down. Anna could hardly believe it. She had heard it go down but still she said several times over, "Hallo? Hallo?" and "Are you still there?"

She went downstairs and found the telephone directory for the area and looked up Yackle. It wasn't there. She sat down and worked her way through all the Ys. There weren't many pages of Ys, apart from Youngs, but there was no one with a name beginning with Y at that address on the rustic road among the cottages.

She couldn't get to sleep. She expected the phone to ring again, Maria Yackle to ring back. After a while, she put the bedlamp on and lay there in the light. It must have been three, and still she had not slept, when Griselda came in, got on the bed, and stretched her length along Anna's legs. She put out the light, deciding not to answer the phone if it did ring, to relax, forget the run-over cat, concentrate on nice things. As she turned face-downward and stretched her body straight, she felt Griselda's claws prickle her calves. As she shrank away from contact, curled up her legs, and left Griselda a good half of the bed, a thick rough purring began.

The first thing she thought of when she woke up was how upset that poor cat woman had been. She expected her to phone back at breakfast time but nothing happened. Anna fed Griselda, left her to her house, her cat flap, her garden and wider territory, and drove to work. Richard phoned as soon as she got in. Could they meet the following evening? She agreed, obscurely wishing he had said that

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night, suggesting that evening herself only to be told he had to work late, had a dinner with a client.

She had been home for ten minutes when a car drew up outside. It was an old car, at least ten years old, and not only dented and scratched but with some of the worst scars painted or sprayed over in a different shade of red. Anna, who saw it arrive from a front window, watched the woman get out of it and approach the house. She was old, or at least elderly—is elderly older than old or old older than elderly?—but dressed like a teenager. Anna got a closer look at her clothes, her hair, and her face when she opened the front door.

It was a wrinkled face, the color and texture of a chicken's wattles. Small blue eyes were buried somewhere in the strawberry redness. The bright white hair next to it was as much of a contrast as snow against scarlet cloth. She wore tight jeans with socks pulled up over the bottoms of them, dirty white trainers, and a big loose sweatshirt with a cat's face on it, a painted smiling bewhiskered mask, orange and white and green-eyed.

Anna had read somewhere the comment made by a young girl on an older woman's boast that she could wear a miniskirt because she had good legs: "It's not your legs, it's your face." She thought of this as she looked at Maria Yackle, but that was the last time for a long while she thought of anything like that.

"I've come early because we shall have a lot to talk about," Maria Yackle said and walked in. She did this in such a way as to compel Anna to open the door farther and stand aside.

"This is *your* house?"

She might have meant because Anna was so young or perhaps there was some more offensive reason for asking.

"My parents'. I'm just staying here."

"Is it this room?" She was already on the threshold of Anna's mother's living room.

Anna nodded. She had been taken aback but only for a moment. It was best to get this over. But she did not care to be dictated to. "You could have let me know. I might not have been here."

There was no reply because Maria Yackle had seen Griselda.

The cat had been sitting on the back of a wing chair between the wings, an apparently uncomfortable place though a favorite, but at sight of the newcomer had stretched, got down, and was walking toward her. Maria Yackle put out her hand. It was a horrible hand, large and red with ropelike blue veins standing out above the bones,

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the palm calloused, the nails black and broken and the sides of the forefinger and thumb ingrained with brownish dirt. Griselda approached and put her smoky whitish muzzle and pink nose into this hand.

"I shouldn't," Anna said rather sharply, for Maria Yackle was bending over to pick the cat up. "She isn't very nice. She doesn't like people."

"She'll like me."

And the amazing thing was that Griselda did. Maria Yackle sat down and Griselda sat on her lap. Griselda the unfriendly, the cold-hearted, the cat who purred when alone and who ceased to purr when touched, the ice-eyed, the standoffish walker-by-herself, settled down on this unknown, untried lap, having first climbed up Maria Yackle's chest and onto her shoulders and rubbed her ears and plump furry cheeks against the sweatshirt with the painted cat face.

"You seem surprised."

Anna said, "You could say that."

"There's no mystery. The explanation's simple." It was a shrill, harsh voice, cracked by the onset of old age, articulate, the usage grammatical but the accent raw cockney. "You and your mum and dad, too, no doubt, you all think you smell very nice and pretty. You have your bath every morning with bath essence and scented soap. You put talcum powder on and spray stuff in your armpits, you rub cream on your bodies and squirt on perfume. Maybe you've washed your hair, too, with shampoo and conditioner and—what-do-they-call-it?—mousse. You clean your teeth and wash your mouth, put a drop more perfume behind your ears, paint your faces—well, I daresay your dad doesn't paint his face, but he shaves, doesn't he? More mousse and then aftershave.

"You put on your clothes. All of them clean, spotless. They've either just come back from the dry-cleaners or else out of the washing machine with biological soap and spring-fresh fabric softener. Oh, I know, I may not do it myself but I see it on the TV.

"It all smells very fine to you, but it doesn't to her. Oh, no. To her it's just chemicals, like gas might be to you or paraffin. A nasty strong chemical smell that puts her right off and makes her shrink up in her furry skin. What's her name?"

This question was uttered on a sharp bark. "Griselda," said Anna, and, "How did you know it's a she?"

"Face," said Maria Yackle. "Look—see her little nose. See her

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smiley mouth and her little nose and her fat cheeks? Tomcats got a big nose, got a long muzzle. Never mind if he's been neutered, still got a big nose."

"What did you come here to say to me?" said Anna.

Griselda had curled up on the cat woman's lap, burying her head, slightly upward turned, in the crease between stomach and thigh. "I don't go in for all that stuff, you see." The big red hand stroked Griselda's head, the stripy bit between her ears. "Cat likes the smell of me because I haven't got my clothes in soapy water every day, I have a bath once a week, always have and always shall, and I don't waste my money on odorizers and deodorizers. I wash my hands when I get up in the morning and that's enough for me."

At the mention of the weekly bath, Anna had reacted instinctively and edged her chair a little farther away. Maria Yackle saw, Anna was sure she saw, but her response to this recoil was to begin on what she had in fact come about: her compensation.

"The cat you killed, she was five years old and the queen of the cats, her name was Melusina. I always have a queen. The one before was Juliana and she lived to be twelve. I wept, I mourned her, but life has to go on. 'The queen is dead,' I said, 'long live the queen!' I never promote one, I always get a new kitten. Some cats are queens, you see, and some are not. Melusina was eight weeks old when I got her from the Animal Rescue people, and I gave them a donation of twenty pounds. The vet charged me twenty-seven pounds fifty for her injections—all my cats are immunized against feline enteritis and leptospirosis—so that makes forty-seven pounds fifty. And she had her booster at age two, which was another twenty-seven fifty. I can show you the receipted bills, I always keep everything, and that makes seventy-five pounds. Then there was my petrol getting her to the vet—we'll say a straight five pounds, though it was more—and then we come to the crunch, her food. She was a good little trencherwoman."

Anna would have been inclined to laugh at this ridiculous word, but she saw to her horror that the tears were running down Maria Yackle's cheeks. They were running unchecked out of her eyes, over the rough red wrinkled skin, and one dripped unheeded onto Griselda's silvery fur.

"Take no notice. I do cry whenever I have to talk about her. I loved that cat. She was the queen of the cats. She had her own place, her throne—she used to sit in the middle of the mantelpiece with

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her two china ladies-in-waiting on each side of her. You'll see one day, when you come to my house.

"But we were talking about her food. She ate a large can a day—it was too much, more than she should have had, but she loved her food, she was a good little eater. Well, cat food's gone up over the years, of course, what hasn't, and I'm paying fifty pee a can now, but I reckon it'd be fair to average it out at forty pee. She was eight weeks old when I got her, so we can't say five times three hundred and sixty-five. We'll say five times three fifty-five and that's doing you a favor. I've already worked it out at home, I'm not that much of a wizard at mental arithmetic. Five three-hundred and fifty-fives are one thousand, seven hundred and seventy-five, which multiplied by forty makes seventy-one thousand pee or seven hundred and ten pounds. Add to that the seventy-five plus the vet's bill of fourteen pounds when she had a tapeworm and we get a final figure of seven hundred and ninety-nine pounds."

Anna stared at her. "You're asking me to give you nearly eight hundred pounds?"

"That's right. Of course, we'll write it down and do it properly."

"Because your cat ran under the wheels of my car?"

"You murdered her," said Maria Yackle.

"That's absurd. Of course I didn't murder her." On shaky ground, she said, "You can't murder an animal."

"You did. You said you were going too fast."

Had she? She had been, but had she said so?

Maria Yackle got up, still holding Griselda, cuddling Griselda, who nestled purring in her arms. Anna watched with distaste. You thought of cats as fastidious creatures but they were not. Only something insensitive and undiscerning would put its face against that face, nuzzle those rough grimy hands. The black fingernails brought to mind a phrase, now unpleasantly appropriate, that her grandmother had used to children with dirty hands: in mourning for the cat.

"I don't expect you to give me a check now. Is that what you thought I meant? I don't suppose you have that amount in your current account. I'll come back tomorrow or the next day."

"I'm not going to give you eight hundred pounds," said Anna.

She might as well not have spoken.

"I won't come back tomorrow, I'll come back on Wednesday." Griselda was tenderly placed on the seat of an armchair. The tears had dried on Maria Yackle's face, leaving salt trails. She took herself

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out into the hall and to the front door. "You'll have thought about it by then. Anyway, I hope you'll come to the funeral. I hope there won't be any hard feelings."

That was when Anna decided Maria Yackle was mad. In one way, this was disquieting—in another, a comfort. It meant she wasn't serious about the compensation, the seven hundred and ninety-nine pounds. Sane people don't invite you to their cat's funeral. Mad people do not sue you for compensation.

"No, I shouldn't think she'd do that," said Richard when they were having dinner together. He wasn't a lawyer but had studied law. "You didn't admit you were exceeding the speed limit, did you?"

"I don't remember."

"At any rate, you didn't admit it in front of witnesses. You say she didn't threaten you?"

"Oh, no. She wasn't unpleasant. She cried, poor thing."

"Well, let's forget her, shall we, and have a nice time?"

Although no note awaited her on the doorstep, no letter came, and there were no phone calls, Anna knew the cat woman would come back on the following evening. Richard had advised her to go to the police if any threats were made. There would be no need to tell them she had been driving very fast. Anna thought the whole idea of going to the police bizarre. She rang up her friend Kate and told her all about it and Kate agreed that telling the police would be going too far.

The battered red car arrived at seven. Maria Yackle was dressed as she had been for her previous visit, but, because it was rather cold, wore a jacket made of synthetic fur as well. From its harsh, too-shiny texture there was no doubt it was synthetic, but from a distance it looked like a black cat's pelt.

She had brought an album of photographs of her cats for Anna to see. Anna looked through it—what else could she do? Some were recognizably of those she had seen through the windows. Those that were not, she supposed might be of animals now at rest under the wooden crosses in Maria Yackle's back garden. While she was looking at the pictures, Griselda came in and jumped onto the cat woman's lap.

"They're very nice, very interesting," Anna said. "I can see you're devoted to your cats."

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"They're my life."

A little humoring might be in order. "When is the funeral to be?"

"I thought on Friday. Two o'clock on Friday. My sister will be there with her two. Cat's don't usually take to car travel, that's why I don't often take any of mine with me, and shutting them up in cages goes against the grain—but my sister's two Burmese love the car, they'll go and sit in the car when it's parked. My friend from the Animal Rescue will come if she can get away and I've asked our vet, but I don't hold out much hope there. He has his goat clinic on Fridays. I hope you'll come along."

"I'm afraid I'll be at work."

"It's no flowers by request. Donations to the Cats' Protection League instead. Any sum, no matter how small, gratefully received. Which brings me to money. You've got a check for me."

"No, I haven't, Mrs. Yackle."

"Miss. And it's Yakop. J-A-K-O-B. You've got a check for me for seven hundred and ninety-nine pounds."

"I'm not giving you any money, Miss Jakob. I'm very, very sorry about your cat, about Melusina, I know how fond you were of her, but giving you compensation is out of the question. I'm sorry."

The tears had come once more into Maria Jakob's eyes, had spilled over. Her face contorted with misery. It was the mention of the wretched thing's name, Anna thought. That was the trigger that started the weeping. A tear splashed onto one of the coarse red hands. Griselda opened her eyes and licked up the tear.

Maria Jakob pushed her other hand across her eyes. She blinked. "We'll have to think of something else then," she said.

"I beg your pardon?" Anna wondered if she had really heard. Things couldn't be solved so simply.

"We shall have to think of something else. A way for you to make up to me for murder."

"Look, I will give a donation to the Cats' Protection League. I'm quite prepared to give them—say, twenty pounds." Richard would be furious, but perhaps she wouldn't tell Richard. "I'll give it to you, shall I, and then you can pass it on to them?"

"I certainly hope you will. Especially if you can't come to the funeral."

That was the end of it, then. Anna felt a great sense of relief. It was only now that it was over that she realized quite how it had got to her. It had actually kept her from sleeping properly. She phoned

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Kate and told her about the funeral and the goat clinic, and Kate laughed and said Poor old thing. Anna slept so well that night that she didn't notice the arrival of Griselda who, when she woke, was asleep on the pillow next to her face but out of touching distance.

Richard phoned and she told him about it, omitting the part about her offer of a donation. He told her that being firm, sticking to one's guns in situations of this kind, always paid off. In the evening, she wrote a check for twenty pounds but, instead of the Cats' Protection League, made it out to Maria Jakob. If the cat woman quietly held onto it, no harm would be done. Anna went down the road to post her letter, for she had written a letter to accompany the check, in which she reiterated her sorrow about the death of the cat and added that if there was anything she could do Miss Jakob had only to let her know. Richard would have been furious.

Unlike the Jakob cats, Griselda spent a good deal of time out of doors. She was often out all evening and did not reappear until the small hours, so that it was not until the next day, not until the next evening, that Anna began to be alarmed at her absence. As far as she knew, Griselda had never been away so long before. For herself, she was unconcerned—she had never liked the cat, did not particularly like any cats, and found this one obnoxiously self-centered and cold. It was for her mother, who unaccountably loved the creature, that she was worried. She walked up and down the street calling Griselda, though the cat had never been known to come when it was called.

It did not come now. Anna walked up and down the next street, calling, and around the block and farther afield. She half expected to find Griselda's body, guessing that it might have met the same fate as Melusina. Hadn't she read somewhere that nearly forty thousand cats are killed on British roads annually?

On Saturday morning, she wrote one of those melancholy lost-cat notices and attached it to a lamp standard, wishing she had a photograph. But her mother had taken no photographs of Griselda.

Richard took her to a friend's party and afterward, when they were driving home, he said, "You know what's happened, don't you? It's been killed by that old mad woman. An eye for an eye, a cat for a cat."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't do that. She loves cats."

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"Murderers love people. They just don't love the people they murder."

"I'm sure you're wrong," said Anna, but she remembered how Maria Jakob had said that if the money was not forthcoming, she must think of something else—a way to make up to her for Melusina's death. And she had not meant a donation to the Cats' Protection League.

"What shall I do?"

"I don't see that you can do anything. It's most unlikely you could prove it, she'll have seen to that. You can look at it this way—she's had her pound of flesh."

"Fifteen pounds of flesh," said Anna. Griselda had been a large, heavy cat.

"Okay, fifteen pounds. She's had that, she's had her revenge. It hasn't actually caused you any grief—you'll just have to make up some story for your mother."

Anna's mother was upset, but nowhere near as upset as Maria Jakob had been over the death of Melusina. To avoid too much fuss, Anna had gone further than she intended, told her mother that she had seen Griselda's corpse and talked to the offending motorist, who had been very distressed.

A month or so later, Anna's mother got a kitten, a grey tabby tomkitten, who was very affectionate from the start, sat on her lap, purred loudly when stroked, and snuggled up in her arms, though Anna was sure her mother had not stopped having baths or using perfume. So much for the Jakob theories.

Nearly a year had gone by before she again drove down the road where Maria Jakob's house was. She had not intended to go that way. Directions had been given her to a smallholding where they sold early strawberries on a roadside stall but she must have missed her way, taken a wrong turning, and come out here.

If Maria Jakob's car had been parked in the front, she would not have stopped. There was no garage for it to be in and it was not outside, therefore the cat woman must be out. Anna thought of the funeral she had not been to—she had often thought about it, the strange people and strange cats who had attended it.

In each of the bay windows sat a cat, a tortoiseshell and a brown tabby. The black cat was eyeing her from upstairs. Anna didn't go to the front door but round the back. There, among the long grass,

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as she had expected, were four graves instead of three, four wooden crosses, and on the fourth was printed in black gloss paint: MELUSINA, THE QUEEN OF THE CATS, MURDERED IN HER SIXTH YEAR. RIP.

That "murdered" did not please Anna. It brought back all the resentment at the unjust accusations of eleven months before. She felt much older, she felt wiser. One thing was certain, ethics or no ethics, if she ever ran over a cat again she'd drive on—the last thing she'd do was go and confess.

She came round the side of the house and looked in at the bay window. If the tortoiseshell had still been on the windowsill, she probably would not have looked in, but the tortoiseshell had removed itself to the hearthrug.

A white cat and the marmalade-and-white lay curled up side by side in an armchair. The portrait of Melusina hung above the fireplace and this year's cat calendar was up on the left-hand wall. Light gleamed on the china cats' gilt whiskers—and between them, in the empty space that was no longer vacant, sat Griselda.

Griselda was sitting in the queen's place in the middle of the mantelpiece. She sat in the sphinx position with her eyes closed. Anna tapped on the glass and Griselda opened her eyes, stared with cold indifference, and closed them again.

The queen is dead, long live the queen!

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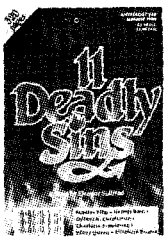

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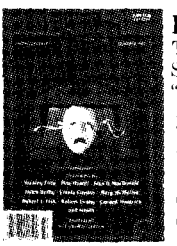

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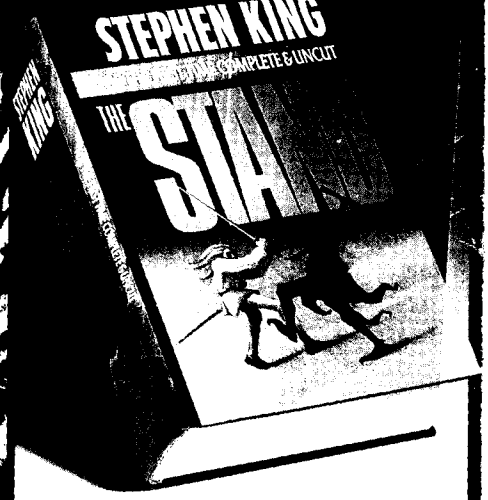

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